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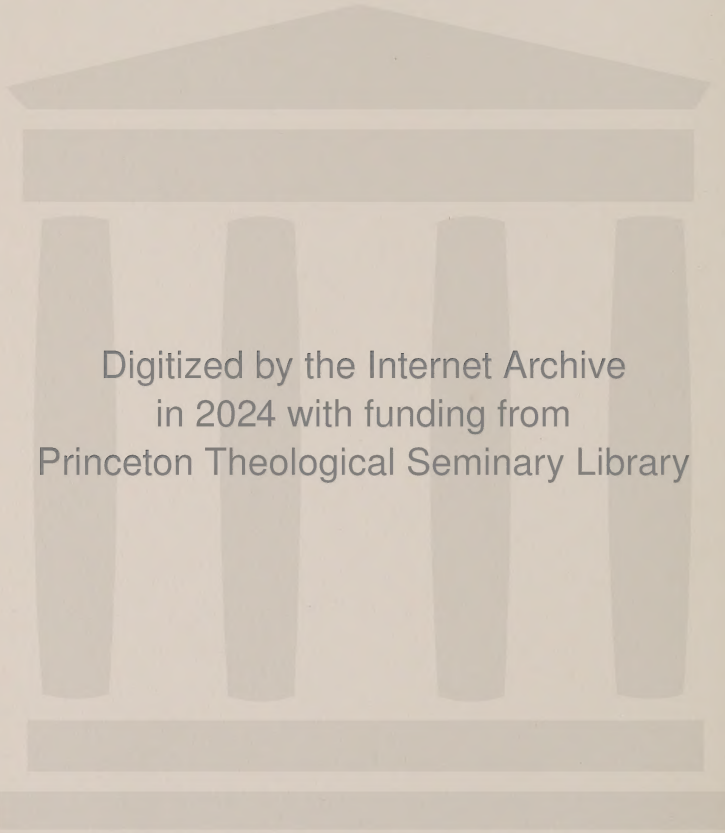
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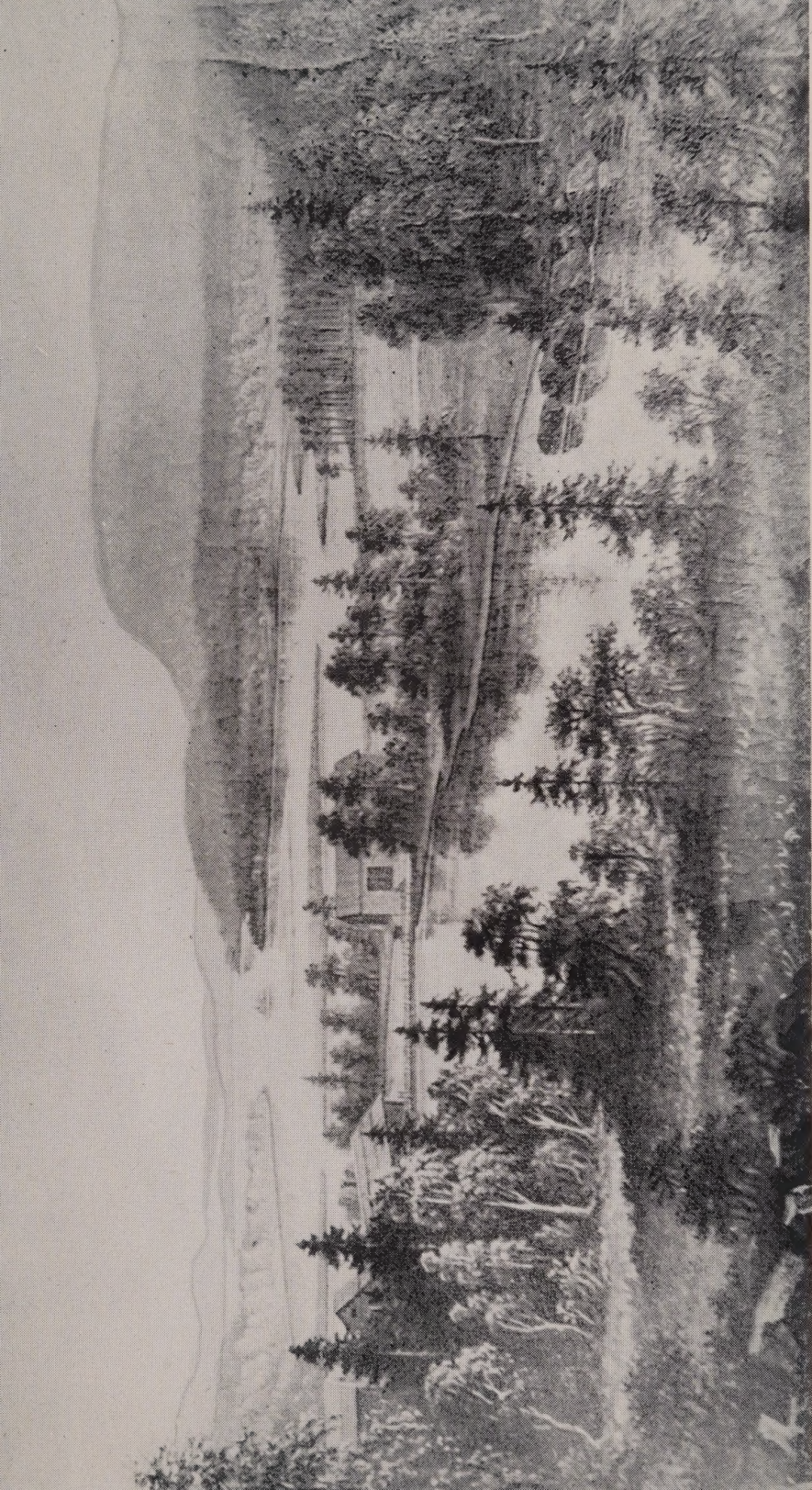
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ERIC NORELIUS



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The Hassela Region in Hälsingland province, Sweden. From a painting by an unknown artist, based on a sketch by Norelius.

ERIC NORELIUS

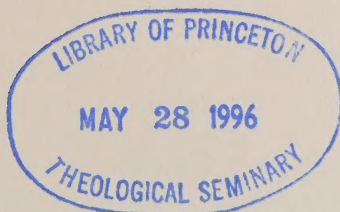
1833-1916

*Pioneer Midwest Pastor
and Churchman*

By

✓
EMEROY JOHNSON

*Published in co-operation
with the Minnesota Conference of the
Augustana Lutheran Church-*



AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS

ERIC NORELIUS

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1954

Preface

THE NAME "Eric Norelius" has been familiar to Swedish immigrants and their descendants, particularly in Minnesota, since 1854. As a pastor, travelling missionary, church administrator, editor, founder of institutions, and as a personal friend, his name was a household word in thousands of homes from the time of his ordination to the ministry in 1856 until his death in 1916.

The transition from the Swedish to the English language in the churches established by the Swedish pioneers had already begun before Norelius died, and was completed in the next generation. Since most of the writings of Norelius and of the material pertaining to his life is in the Swedish language, the story of this pioneer pastor and churchman has become almost a forgotten chapter. The need of a biography of Norelius has been voiced at various times by those who knew of his contribution.

It was a non-Scandinavian pastor of the Lutheran Minnesota Conference, the Reverend William Siegel, who first voiced such a request in an official way, when at a pastoral conference held in St. Peter, Minnesota, in the fall of 1951 he offered a resolution calling on the Executive Committee of the Conference to "consider the possibility and advisability of publishing a biography of Eric Norelius." The motion was adopted by the approximately one hundred pastors in attendance.

In response to this resolution the Executive Committee voted to publish a biography of Dr. Norelius, and requested the present writer to undertake the duty of preparing the manuscript. It was the desire of the Committee that the book should be published in the spring of 1954, the 100th anniversary of Norelius' first visit to Minnesota.

A volume entitled "Early Life of Eric Norelius, 1833-1862" had been published by the Augustana Book Concern, in collaboration with Augustana Historical Society, in 1934. This book was a translation by the present writer of Eric Norelius' autobiographical sketches published in Swedish in *Augustana* under the title "Minnesteckningar av Eric Norelius." These appeared weekly in serial form from July 31, 1930 to March 26, 1931 and from April 9 to August 27, 1931. An editorial in *Augustana*, July 31, 1930, the issue in which publication of the "Minnesteckningar" was

begun, states that the manuscript had been turned over to the publishers by Leonard Norelius of Vasa, Minnesota, a son of Dr. Norelius. A foreword by Dr. Norelius was dated 1916, the year in which he died. This accounts for the fact that the autobiography was not completed. The manuscript gave the story of Norelius' life only until 1855. It was based on the diaries of Norelius, which, he says, he had started at the age of fifteen. A diary which records his childhood and early youth in Sweden, his voyage to America, and his first year in America, is in the archives at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. It is entitled "En Minnesbok." Other personal records are found, some in Rock Island, some at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, but no complete series of diaries seems to be extant.

Autobiographical articles covering some of the early pioneer period in Minnesota were written by Norelius and published in the Swedish annual, *Korsbaneret*. His "Hågkomster från 1854" appeared in *Korsbaneret* 1888; "Hågkomster från 1855" in 1889; and "Hågkomster från 1856" in 1890. The series of "Minnesteckningar" in *Augustana* also included "Hågkomster från 1860-61" and "Dagbok 1885-86." The last mentioned covered seven months of activity by Norelius as home missionary on the West Coast. The entire series of articles was translated into English and published in *The Lutheran Companion*, 1933 and the early part of 1934. The "Dagbok 1885-86" was not included in the volume "Early Life of Eric Norelius."

Other sources for the early years and for the later period consist of a large collection of letters and published material, most of which is in the Denkmann Library at Augustana College. Acknowledgment is hereby gratefully made to President Conrad Bergendoff, the Library staff, and the historian of the Augustana Lutheran Church, Dr. Oscar N. Olson, for all their helpful assistance and advice given in regard to the use of the material in the Augustana archives. The only regret is that time did not permit a complete study of all the available material.

Some of the manuscript material is in the archives of Gustavus Adolphus College, and Dr. Conrad Peterson, archivist of the College and of the Minnesota Conference, has given his assistance in making the material available.

Miss Vendla Norelius, Osseo, Minnesota, a granddaughter of Eric Norelius, has also made available some manuscripts and other material, including the painting which is reproduced as the frontis-

piece of this book. Most of the material which has been in her possession since the death of her grandfather has now been deposited in the archives at Gustavus Adolphus College.

Church records at Vasa and at Red Wing, Minnesota, have been consulted, as well as records in the Goodhue county courthouse in Red Wing, and some records have been made available by private individuals. These are acknowledged in the references. A special word of gratitude is due to Pastor and Mrs. Arthur L. Chell of the Spring Garden Lutheran Church for their personal interest and helpfulness in this project.

References to manuscript material made in the notes in this volume are to the collections at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, unless otherwise mentioned in each specific case.

There are also frequent references to Norelius' *Historia*. This refers to the monumental two-volume history, "De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnes Historia i Amerika," written by Norelius and published by Augustana Book Concern, Volume I in 1890 and Volume II in 1916. This history, particularly Volume I, contains a great deal of original source material, gathered by Norelius from the time of his arrival in America and augmented since his election as historian of the Augustana Synod in 1869.

Swedish and American periodicals also have yielded much interesting and important information. Most of the files that have been consulted are in the Denkmann Library at Augustana College, others at Gustavus Adolphus College, and some in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Dr. Emil Swenson, president of the Minnesota Conference, and the other members of the Executive Committee, deserve a special word of gratitude for their sustained and sustaining interest in the project. The writer also expresses appreciation to Dr. Eston E. Erickson of the faculty of Gustavus Adolphus College, who has read the manuscript and offered helpful comments.

This biography of Eric Norelius is far from being exhaustive. The story of his boyhood in Sweden is given only incidental mention, since *Early Life of Eric Norelius* gives this part of the story in considerable detail. Norelius as a preacher and public speaker could be the subject of a volume of considerable size. The archives at Augustana and Gustavus Adolphus contain hundreds of outlines or complete manuscripts of his sermons and addresses. A

few have been printed in Swedish. One or two translations are included in this volume.

Though this volume has many pages relating to the home mission work done by Norelius this represents only a fraction of the story. If a complete history of Augustana home missions is written it will show Norelius playing a leading role in the story throughout the first half century.

Admitting that the present volume is not as complete and exhaustive as it might have been, the writer nevertheless hopes that it may serve to acquaint present and future generations with the story of a minister who made a significant contribution to the life of the "Middle Border," and particularly to the development of the Lutheran Church in this region.

EMEROY JOHNSON.

Lent, 1954

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Chapter 1

AN IMMIGRANT SHIP ARRIVES

AFTER a voyage of eleven weeks across the Atlantic, the *Odin*, Captain Nordberg in command, was being piloted into the harbor of New York. The boat had sailed from Gävle, Sweden, on August 17, 1850. On October 31 it reached New York.

The little three-masted vessel carried in her hold a cargo of Swedish iron, and on her deck a hundred Swedish men, women, and children who were looking for new homes in the New World.

The number of their countrymen in the United States was not large. More than two centuries had gone by since the first Swedish immigrants came across the Atlantic to build "New Sweden" along the banks of the Delaware River. The descendants of the Delaware Swedes had become assimilated with the colonists of other nationalities. The new immigration from Sweden was just beginning. In 1850 there were but 3,559 Swedish-born persons in the United States.

During the long voyage the passengers on the *Odin* had had time to dream and hope and imagine what America held in store for them. What sort of welcome awaited them? The pilot who boarded the boat as they approached the harbor was the first American they had seen, and they looked at him with unconcealed curiosity. But as yet they could not know if they were being piloted to the fulfillment of their hopes.

There was no
"mighty woman"
on Bedloe's Island,
"lifting her lamp beside the golden door"
as a nation's welcome to the
"masses yearning to breathe free."¹

Castle Garden was a theater and concert hall, not yet transformed into a reception center for immigrants. The "great immigration" was just beginning. In the three decades before 1850 fewer than two million aliens had arrived in the United States. In the year 1850 alone the number was over 300,000, and in the decade of the fifties nearly three million.

To the 700,000 busy residents of New York the arrival of the *Odin* was an incident that mattered little. In the forest of masts from almost every nation in the world, the coming of the little vessel from Sweden was an event of slight importance. But to those on board the *Odin*, it was an unforgettable day and a thrilling scene. Since August 17, they had been on the ocean, through storm and calm, through fair winds and foggy weather. When they sailed from Gävle, Sweden, the company numbered slightly more than 100. During the voyage nine died, one of them just as the vessel sailed into the harbor of New York.

Among those who stood on the deck and watched with eager eyes as the *Odin* docked at a Hudson River pier was a boy, rather sparsely built and somewhat studious in appearance, who had celebrated his seventeenth birthday five days before he came to New York. His name was Eric Norelius. On his birthday, he had found it interesting to review his past experiences as a boy in the northern woodlands of Sweden, and to contemplate his rather uncertain future in America. He had asked himself, "What does God have in store for me? What is to become of me?"

On the long and tedious voyage, there had been days when he told himself that he had made a terrible mistake in leaving his homeland. Homesick and lonely, he had wished he could return, but that was impossible. He must face the future in the new world. The old world, the old home, the old church, father and mother, were left behind. When they put the emigrant trunk in father's old cart and set out from home, mother went along as far as to the churchyard so she could say that she had followed her sons to the grave. When Eric took a final look at the old village of Norrbäck, it was as though his heart was being torn from his bosom. When they passed the church where he had been baptized and confirmed and had taken part in worship, he felt his soul stirred to its depths.

Never again did he really feel at home anywhere. His life came to have the characteristics of a puzzling contradiction: He was a great home-lover and a constant traveller through all his sixty-five years in America.

Though Eric was one of the youngest in the company of immigrants on the *Odin*, he was not despised for his youth, and though he must have been one of the poorest, he enjoyed the full confidence of those who possessed more wealth. On the second day after their arrival in New York, Eric had the responsible



Norrback, the farm home near Hassela, Sweden, where Norelius was born, 1833, as it appears today. The main building was erected in 1838.



The Chancel in Hassela Church, where 16-year-old Eric sang at the Christmas worship service in 1849.



Charlotte and Eric Norelius, the year of their marriage, 1855.



The little log cabin on the claim at Belle Creek, Pastor and Mrs. Norelius' first home in Minnesota.

duty of figuring how much each one in the company was to receive when he exchanged his Swedish crowns for American dollars. Then, together with two other men, he went to a Wall Street bank and got the money exchanged. As they returned to the ship Eric carried several thousand dollars in gold in a little leather pouch. His two bodyguards kept close watch and no one molested him. Safely on board ship, they went below, where Eric made distribution to everyone's satisfaction. They paid him five dollars for his help in this, their first business transaction in New York. Aside from the fact that he was completely trustworthy, this important duty was assigned to him because he had a little more education than anyone else in the company. He had attended high school in Hudiksvall, where he had completed two years of studies in one year. He had also spent some time studying by himself. For a short time he had a private tutor. His hope, when he entered high school, was to go on to the study of theology and to enter the ministry of the Church of Sweden. From his earliest childhood he had felt a desire to become a minister and he was overjoyed when his father at last gave consent, and let him go away to school. But after a year it became evident to Eric that it would be impossible for his father to pay the costs of several years of schooling.

In the spring of 1850 Eric's two oldest brothers were getting married. They came to Hudiksvall to do some shopping about Easter time, and Eric returned home with them. He was dejected and discouraged, as all doors seemed closed against him. On his return home he found the community astir with talk and rumors of people going to America.

Per Anderson—familiarily known among his neighbors as Joris Pelle—a rather well-to-do farmer living a few miles from Eric's home, had decided to sell his land and move to America. Soon others in the neighborhood, old and young, married and unmarried, were making plans to go with him. Many who had no money obtained loans from the good-hearted Anderson so they could make the journey. Naturally Anderson came to be looked upon as the leader of the group.

Eric's three older brothers had also felt the urge to try their wings and set out for America with Joris Pelle's company. But Per and Jonas, after taking upon themselves the responsibilities of the married estate, lost interest in the emigration venture. Anders, three years older than Eric, had his heart set on going

to America and no one could dissuade him. Then it was that Eric also began to think seriously of going.

At the time when Eric found it impossible to continue his schooling at Hudiksvall, he wrote to a minister in Stockholm, A. Wiberg, who then was a Lutheran pastor in the service of the state church. He asked Wiberg's advice as to how he might continue his studies. Wiberg suggested to Eric that America might offer the opportunity he was looking for. Eric had also read, in "Lunds Missionstidning" that a Swedish Lutheran pastor named Lars P. Esbjörn had set out for America in 1849, to serve his scattered countrymen. A resident of a neighboring parish had gone to America and Eric had read some of the letters he had written, mentioning a Swedish Methodist minister, Olof Hedstrom in New York, who also had a brother, Jonas, in Victoria, Illinois. Although these accounts of life and of church conditions in America did not appeal to Eric, yet they served to arouse his interest. With his brother Anders urging him on, Eric finally agreed that he would go. The two brothers had no money of their own, but their father gave them 300 rixdollars for the journey. When they reached America they were "on their own."

These one hundred immigrants had discussed among themselves what they would do, and their plan was to stay together as a group, find a suitable location where they could buy farm land and there form a Swedish colony. They had hopes of getting a pastor from Sweden, and he would help them organize a Swedish Lutheran congregation in this land where freedom of religion was everybody's right according to law.

But the ranks were soon broken. As soon as they stepped on shore in New York the first member of the company left. Per Anderson's hired girl, Britta Harm, had found it interesting to relieve the tedious voyage by associating with the sailors. Per and his wife had scolded her for this sort of behavior. At the first opportunity when they reached New York, she ran away. Her master and mistress could not find her. She had found freedom in the big city. But she did not live long.²

Among the many New Yorkers who swarmed on board the *Odin* as soon as it docked there was one who showed concern for their religious needs. He told them of a Swedish congregation in New York that had a ship for a church. It was known as "The Bethel Ship." Since it was docked not far from the *Odin* some of the immigrants, including Eric Norelius, went in the evening

Meth.
mission
Bethel Ship

to visit this church-boat. They met the pastor, the Reverend Olof G. Hedstrom, and found him very friendly and willing to give advice. They inquired if he was a Lutheran, and though he told them he was "a Lutheran in the true sense of the word," they were not quite convinced. There seemed to be something unfamiliar about his religious conversation. However, they accepted his invitation to attend a service the following evening. The sermon was in a mixture of Swedish and English, hardly understandable to the newly-arrived immigrants.

Hedstrom

On the following Sunday most of them again attended services on the Bethel Ship, and many of the group participated in the Lord's Supper. They sang from the Swedish *Psalmbok*, and the Swedish Lutheran order of service was used in part.

After the service Eric asked Hedstrom for advice on how he might enter the ministry. Hedstrom told him to join the Methodist Church. If he would do this, he would need no further training for the ministry. He could be ordained a pastor any time.

Meth.
ministry

Eric discussed doctrinal matters with Hedstrom, but soon found that they were not in agreement. Hedstrom was at this time forty-seven years old and had already spent twenty-five years in America. He had left Sweden as a Lutheran, but did not join a Lutheran church in America. Shortly after his marriage to an American girl in 1829, he was converted to the Methodist faith. A few years later he made a journey back to Sweden to win his relatives to this faith. In this he was successful, and his brother Jonas came with him on his return to America.

O. G. Hedstrom was ordained to the ministry in the Methodist Church in 1835 and served ten years in English-speaking congregations. Then the Bethel Ship was bought and a mission established in New York to work among the Scandinavians. Hedstrom was assigned to this place, and served there from 1845 to 1875. He exerted a tremendous influence on many Swedish immigrants during his thirty years of service as the Bethel Ship missionary.

N.
30-y service
on Bethel Ship

The seventeen-year-old Eric Norelius was favorably impressed by Hedstrom's warm and friendly personality, and his very evident sincerity in Christian piety and character.³

But Eric did not want to become a Methodist, though it must have been an attractive prospect to think of entering the ministry of a large and influential American church denomination. Though this possibility must have loomed up as a tempting offer, Eric was

not willing to accept it. As a boy in Sweden he had not only read the required lessons in Catechism and Bible History, but at fifteen years of age he had read Luther's Commentary on Galatians, and also the Book of Concord, to learn what the Lutheran Church believes and teaches. It was a time of religious controversy in the regions where Norelius lived. Pietistic preachers came and went. Pastors and professors debated. The people vacillated between opposing parties, some legalistic, some more evangelical. A few became fanatical and separated from the Church.⁴

Eric Norelius read the Bible and the basic Lutheran books to see if he could find for himself the clarity that he had not found elsewhere. Now he discovered the truth of the Scriptures. The principle of justification by faith alone became a living reality in his mind and soul.

When he discussed religion with O. G. Hedstrom in New York, he felt that this Methodist pastor of many years experience did not clearly distinguish between law and gospel, and between grace and works. Eric turned away from the Bethel Ship, away from Methodism, to face an unknown future as a penniless boy in America to find a way to become a Lutheran minister and to serve the church whose doctrine he was convinced was in harmony with the Scriptures.⁵

Four families, besides the runaway Britta, stayed in New York when the rest of the company left on November 4. The group, now numbering less than ninety, journeyed up the Hudson River on the steamer Isaac Newton. Herded together like cattle on a lower deck, with no place to lie down, they spent a miserable night between New York and Albany. From Albany to Buffalo they travelled by train, in coaches that had no seats except benches lengthwise along the two sides. The trip to Buffalo took more than twenty-four hours, and the greatest difficulty experienced by the immigrants was that they could hardly buy any food, since they could not speak English. Again it was Eric who could help a little in the emergency. He had bought a Swedish-English Pocket Lexicon and studied it diligently to learn how to ask for the necessities of life.⁶

In Buffalo, as the immigrants stood huddled together in a drenching rain, Eric had to rely on his knowledge of the German language to get guidance and help for the group. It became necessary for them to stay there from the 6th to the 8th before going on board the steamer *Sultana* which was to take them across

Es war
gerade
die Zeit
als er
Luthers
Katechismus
und das
Büchlein
der Concordia
las.

Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan to Chicago. Several of the group, including Eric, became sick while they waited in Buffalo. They could not stand on the open decks, crowded in among the rest of the passengers. They had no money to pay for better accommodations. Per Anderson, as a good Samaritan, saw to it that the sick were properly cared for, and paid the bill, which, in this case, was forty dollars.⁷

It was a six-day voyage across the lakes, as the boat went aground once on a sandbar, and many stops were made at lake ports. Late in the evening of November 14, they arrived in Chicago, weary of the slow lake voyage, and glad to be on land again.⁸

Chicago had sprung up in "the place where the wild onions grow," where the Chicago River flowed into Lake Michigan. It was seventeen years old in 1850 when the seventeen-year-old Eric Norelius came to this young and growing metropolis. Already there were 30,000 people, and Norelius prophesied that it would be the largest city in the west, if not in the whole country. Most of the houses were small frame buildings. As yet there were only a few houses north of the Chicago River.⁹

A few Swedes had settled in Chicago in the "forties," and it was not long before Eric Norelius and his companions found some of their countrymen. They learned that a Swedish pastor had come to Chicago and had organized a Swedish congregation. The pastor's name was Gustaf Unonius. He came to call on the newly-arrived immigrants. Eric introduced himself as a student from Sweden, now seeking an opportunity to finish his training and enter the ministry in America. Rev. Unonius was greatly interested. When Eric asked him about the prospects for the Swedish Lutheran Church in America he replied, "I am the only true representative of the Swedish Church in America."¹⁰

Unonius

Epis Ch

Unonius had come to the United States in 1841, together with a group of immigrants from Sweden who settled as a colony at Pine Lake, near Nashotah, Wisconsin, some thirty miles west of Milwaukee. Unonius had studied at Uppsala University in Sweden. Now he, with his young bride, intended to become a pioneer farmer in Wisconsin, but being entirely unaccustomed to this sort of work he found it very difficult, as did many others in the colony. Most of the settlers moved away. Unonius came under the religious influence of an Episcopalian mission school that had been established at Nashotah, and after some years of study at this school he was ordained as a clergyman of the Protestant Epis-

St Ansgar's
copal faith. After serving on the frontier a few years he moved, in 1849, to Chicago, where he organized a Swedish Episcopal congregation, St. Ansgar's Church. When Jenny Lind sang in Chicago in 1850, she gave a contribution of \$1,500.00 for the erection of a church for the congregation.¹¹

When Unonius told Eric Norelius that he was the only true representative of the Swedish Church in America, he meant to say that the Episcopal Church in America was the one that most nearly corresponded with the Church of Sweden in its polity and form. He was very willing to help Eric find a place where he could attend school if he would join the Episcopal Church.¹²

in Andover
The immigrant group had decided to go to Andover, a new Swedish settlement 175 miles west of Chicago. There was no railroad west of Chicago, and the only means of travel was by canal boat to Peru, on the Illinois River, then overland by team and wagon. Unonius helped them get tickets for the boat. Just as the boat was to leave, on November 16, Unonius sent a message to Eric, saying that he could stay in Chicago and begin his studies immediately. It was too late. The boat was already leaving, and Eric went with his companions on their journey to western Illinois. The group had been diminished somewhat as one family decided to stay in Chicago.¹³

It was a slow boat that crawled across Illinois with its load of immigrants and baggage. The distance to Peru was only a hundred miles, but it took three days to get there. From Peru to Andover was a sparsely settled area, with roads few and poor. Those who could afford it hired livery teams to take them and their baggage to Andover. Eric and his brother and thirteen others set out walking, after storing their baggage in Peru. Surviving a cold night in a deserted country schoolhouse, another night in a barn near the village of Princeton, and a third night in the kitchen of a farm house, they finally straggled into the Andover community in the midst of a severe snowstorm on November 23. It was four months and five days since Eric and Anders Norelius left their home in Sweden. Now at Andover they found countrymen with whom they might stay temporarily. Two times on the way Eric had faced the question as to the choice of a future course. In New York and Chicago he had seen opportunities that might have made his life more easy and more secure. He had chosen the harder path because his conscience and his convictions urged him

on to find the one Swedish Lutheran pastor then living in America, the Reverend Lars P. Esbjörn at Andover, Illinois.¹⁴

NOTES

¹Quotations from Emma Lazarus, *The New Colossus*.

²Norelius, *En Minnesbok*. A manuscript letter from William M. Baxter, New York, to Eric Norelius, dated December 2, 1854, tells of the death of Britta Harm. She had died of typhus at Bellevue Hospital. Mr. Baxter gives this testimony concerning her: "Britta loved the Bible and Christians and the Church. Death seemed to be no terror to her."

³Norelius, *Historia*, I, 16-24.

⁴*Early Life of Eric Norelius, 1833-1862*, a translation by Emeroy Johnson, Rock Island, Ill., Augustana Book Concern, 1934, 26ff., 51ff.

⁵*Early Life*, 104ff.

⁶*Early Life*, 107ff.

⁷*Early Life*, 108f.

⁸*Early Life*, 110.

⁹*Early Life*, 110.

¹⁰*Early Life*, 110.

¹¹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 4ff.

¹²*Early Life*, 111.

¹³*Early Life*, 111f.

¹⁴*Early Life*, 112ff.

Chapter 2

MEMORIES FROM SWEDEN

THE MEMORIES that Eric cherished in his heart from childhood were mostly pleasant ones. Though country life in northern Sweden in the 1830's and '40's called for much labor on the part of every member of the family, and luxuries were unknown, there had been no unusual hardship nor any real privation in Eric's home. Food and clothing were plain but sufficient, provided largely from the farm by the skill and efforts of the members of the family. The community in which they lived was a region of hills and woods and lakes, and Eric had learned to love nature and to enjoy the outdoor life.

At the time of Eric's birth in 1833 his father was a cotter on a large estate, but he was industrious and thrifty and in a few years was able to buy the farm on which he lived. His name originally was Anders Pehrson. He later took the name Norelius. It seems that Eric was the first member of the family to adopt this name, at the time he was a student in Hudiksvall. The name was presumably derived from Norrbäck, the name of the place where they lived.

The ancestors of Eric Norelius had lived in the community for several generations. On his maternal grandmother's side he was a descendant of a Finnish farmer who had moved to Sweden in 1598.

Eric had three brothers older than himself, and one younger sister. Among his earliest memories were how he sat on the floor and played with some little sticks that his brothers gave him; sitting on a tuft of grass while his parents worked in a hay meadow, and how he was left to cry one day when they set fire to a wasp nest and had to run from the angry insects; the one and only time his grandmother came to visit at his home; playing with some of the boys in the neighborhood; how one neighbor played the violin, and how that same neighbor carried on when he was drunk; how his mother and other women talked about many things, including religious matters.

Eric was interested in their conversations about spiritual things, but gained no clear insight into these matters. He had

been taught some childhood prayers, and he was allowed to go along to church occasionally. He formed a very exalted opinion about the pastor and the church services. This was due not so much to a deep sense of religious devotion as to a feeling of wonder at the beauty of the sanctuary and the impressive ceremony. From the time he was six years old he learned how to read, the first lessons being given at his father's knee.

At the age of seven or eight Eric was given such duties as cutting spruce twigs for bedding in the stable; cutting and carrying in wood; picking up stones around the house; helping to spool the thread for weaving. There was recreation too, such as snaring rabbits and skiing. Eric became proficient as a skier.

On a neighboring farm lived an old cripple who had nothing to do but sit and read. To him Eric was sent in order to improve his own knowledge of books. But the Catechism was the only book Eric had, and this he memorized, though he felt this was a punishment rather than an education, until his father rewarded him with a little toy watch which did not run. This brought joy to the heart of the boy who knew no luxuries.

Eric remembered that drinking was common in his home community. Whiskey was made and used in almost every home. Many people used it to excess, but his parents were not among these. One of the most obnoxious drunkards was driven from the community by a crowd of young men and boys armed with snowballs. Eric himself took part in this incident.

Eric's parents owned a large flock of goats and sheep. In the summer time these were herded in pastures on the hills some distance from home. When Eric was eight years old he was appointed assistant to his next older brother for the task of herding the goats. All through the previous winter months Anders and Eric dreamed of the adventures that were to come. They were going to unknown regions, they would meet bears and wolves, they would see strange plants, birds, caves, stones. Perhaps they would even see some trolls with their herds of tiny cows, and their little golden or silver bowls hanging on the trees. Then it would be best to have a piece of steel or flint ready to throw over the troll's property, for then they fled and left their belongings.

Spring came late in northern Sweden, and it was not until the latter part of May that the cattle could be let out to pasture. Then at last came the glorious golden days that the assistant goat-

herd had been longing for. The days were not all sunny and bright. On rainy days the boys would build a fire to keep them warm and dry. Sometimes the goats went berserk and it was an all-day job to bring them to their senses again. But there were many happy hours of sheer fun, climbing like squirrels in the trees, fishing for trout in the brooks, bathing and swimming, making birchbark shoes. After one summer as assistant goatherd Eric was promoted to assume the task alone at the age of nine.

After six summers spent as goatherd, during which he learned to live in intimate fellowship with hills and valleys, streams and springs, forests and flowers, animals and birds, Eric felt that the spirit of nature was almost more real to him than God. But his conscience kept him from becoming a worshipper of nature. He did not allow his Catechism to slip from memory.

During the winters from the time he was ten years of age he had the responsible job of caring for charcoal kilns in the woods, as charcoal was one of the few commodities that his father could sell for cash. Though the kilns were on his father's farm Eric could not go home to sleep at night but lived in a little cabin near the kiln. Winter nights were long in that northern latitude, and the weather was often extremely dreary. The boy's father would start the fire in the kiln, then Eric stayed to see that it continued to burn properly. Sometimes the kiln exploded from pent-up steam, and then the boy raced on skis to summon help. One winter the kilns were on the north side of a ridge of land, and Eric did not see the sun from Christmas until Easter. It was a melancholy job for a young boy. When "Coal-Sigrid" behaved, Eric busied himself with knitting socks for himself—and reviewing the Catechism.

In some boys' life this might have created hatred and fear that would last a lifetime, but Eric had no dread of the wilderness or of being alone. To him nature was a friend, and solitude was an opportunity for thought.

In the winter of 1842-43, when Eric was nine years old, a new religious force began to affect him. An itinerant lay preacher came to the community, and services of Bible reading, prayer, and singing were held in the Norelius home. This preacher, Olof Stromberg by name, was a farm hand from a neighboring parish. He spoke straight from the shoulder, with the result that many,

including young Eric, were deeply touched, sensing a need of repentance and conversion.

The pastor of the congregation approved the activities of this lay preacher and urged his parishioners to come and hear the sermons. Drinking parties ceased, and many of the drunkards changed their ways. The "awakening" continued for some time, and spread to other parishes. Some of the men in the community began to lead similar meetings, and the movement resulted in a great zeal for study of the Bible and the way of salvation. Stromberg, however, was legalistic and could not guide the people to any other way than the way of repentance and prayer that they might have victory over sin. Yet there was a deep earnestness; inner unity, and spiritual fervor characterized the people of the community.

A strange phenomenon made its appearance the following year, when several young persons in the community experienced a sort of trance, which became generally known as "preaching sickness." Eric himself was one who had this experience, and he has described it as follows:

"There was a meeting one evening in my father's house. A farmer by the name of Per Danielson from a nearby village led the service. While he was reading a chapter from Isaiah, a girl a year older than I went into a trance, and in that state she began to talk calmly and coherently about the need of repentance and putting away sin. She had done this several times before, both at home and at meetings. The people sat and listened quietly and with deep emotion. After a while she stopped, and Danielson began to speak about the chapter he had read. I stood by the fireplace and listened attentively. Suddenly I had a fainting spell, became unconscious and had no sensation of the world around me. I thought I saw hell and the devil, and condemned souls suffering untold agony in the fire. In this condition I cried out a warning to the people, that they should flee from the wrath to come by means of true repentance. Certain sins in particular must be put away. Thus it was told to me afterwards. When I had awakened and for a long time after I felt an indescribable happiness. I considered myself as one who had been granted special grace. I now believed that God had taken away all my sins and made me a sinless saint, and I felt an inner self-satisfaction over this. For a time I was very strict with myself and with others. I knelt in the presence of my family and prayed aloud, consider-

ing this as a merit on my part. I did not yet know the gospel, nor did I have a right knowledge of what sin is."

Several years went by before Eric found the spiritual light that could rightly illumine his soul. He was confirmed in the village church at the age of fifteen. He knew his Catechism and Bible history, but yet his heart had no clear light and no peace. The pastor was unable to give the needed advice and guidance.

Other preachers visited the community, and Olof Stromberg returned, now with a somewhat different message, a more evangelical tone. Now he was selling the writings of Luther and of the Swedish pietistic leader, Carl Olof Rosenius. The Norelius family bought a copy of Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and also the Book of Concord. With these as his guide in the study of the Scriptures, Eric found the meaning of justification by faith alone. He was also influenced by the writings of a Lutheran pastor in Finland, F. G. Hedberg, whose books came to the attention of the public in Sweden about this time. Eric Norelius later looked upon these experiences as the dawning of a new day for him, when the sun of righteousness arose for him with healing in its wings.

Even before this time Eric had at times felt a desire to go into the ministry. Now it became a fervent hope, the goal of his life. Ministers in the state church of Sweden were generally well educated men, and Eric did not expect an easy way of reaching his goal. At the age of fifteen he had no formal schooling. The nearest high school was at Hudiksvall, some fifty miles away. With his father's permission, but with little hope of any financial help from him, Eric enrolled in that school in the fall of 1848. In the summer of 1849 he obtained some help from a private tutor, and returned to Hudiksvall in the fall. Poverty made his life discouragingly hard. At Christmas time Eric was granted permission by the church council in his home parish to ask for aid from the parishioners. As a preliminary to this "begging tour" he was to appear at the early Christmas morning service in the church and sing the Christmas epistle (Isaiah 9:2-7). Though everything seemed to be in a whirl as he walked from the sacristy to the chancel he sighed a prayer to God, overcame his stage fright and sang with calm and joyful feelings.

As his father drove and took him from house to house after Christmas Eric sang at the doors of the parishioners, and in most homes he found a welcome and a gift of oats or barley,

Galatians
+
Book of Concord

or a loaf of bread or a sausage. But it was not enough to provide for his keep at school. In the spring of 1850 he came home from Hudiksvall, with no plans for continuing his education. It was then that he turned his thoughts to America.

NOTES

¹This chapter is a brief summary of Norelius' own account of his childhood and youth in Sweden, as recorded in the manuscript "En Minnesbok," and translated in "Early Life of Eric Norelius," pages 1-95. The copy of Luther's commentary on Galatians which Norelius read in his home in Sweden is now in the archives at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota. Inside the back cover these words have been written: "E. Norelius, a lover of this book. 4 June 1850."

Chapter 3

WITH ESBJÖRN IN ANDOVER

THE REV. LARS P. ESBJÖRN had come to America in 1849, at the age of forty-one, after having served for seventeen years as a pastor in the Church of Sweden. When Norelius came to call on him the first time, the evening of November 24, 1850, he found him busy teaching geometry to two young ladies. This was not an unusual occupation for the pastor. His education in Sweden, and his continued studies, led him often into other fields besides theology. Later, in the course of his career as a college professor he taught mathematics, chemistry, and astronomy, and some years later we find him carrying on an extensive correspondence with the government of Ecuador regarding the erection of an astronomical observatory on the Galapagos Islands.¹

But his real purpose in coming to the United States was to seek his scattered countrymen, that he might minister to their spiritual needs. He knew that several thousand Swedes had emigrated to the United States, and he knew that there was not one Swedish Lutheran minister in all America. He had therefore sought permission from the authorities in the Church of Sweden, and this had been granted, so that when he came he came as a minister of that Church. A missionary society granted him a small allowance for his voyage to America, but he had no promise of any salary or any further aid. Poverty and the usual hardships of pioneer life were his daily experience as he went about from place to place, seeking to serve the Swedish immigrants in a region that extended over three counties in western Illinois.²

He had chosen to settle in this region because he knew of the Bishop Hill colony a few miles from Andover, where a religious leader, Erik Jansson, with some fifteen hundred followers had settled. Jansson was a fanatical dissenter from the Church of Sweden, preaching a new doctrine of perfectionism. He left Sweden in 1846. Some of his followers emigrated the same year, and others in the next two or three years. Many of these people were old friends of Esbjörn, for Jansson's first success had come in the Delsbo parish where Esbjörn was pastor at the time.³

Esbjörn had come under the influence of the pietistic move-

ment that flourished in the northern provinces of Sweden in the 1830's and 1840's. Among the leaders in this movement was a Methodist preacher from England, George Scott, who had come to Stockholm for the purpose of ministering to English-speaking people who sojourned in Sweden, mainly in the capital. Though Esbjörn had been a pastor for several years before he met Scott, he was so deeply influenced by Scott that he spoke of it as his conversion. Esbjörn also met a Presbyterian minister from America, Robert Baird. A book written by Baird, *Religious Freedom in the United States*, was translated into Swedish in 1847-48, and was read by Esbjörn. From his personal contact with Baird and from Baird's book Esbjörn formed a very favorable opinion of church life in the United States, and this was a factor in his decision to emigrate. Esbjörn had experienced a considerable amount of opposition from the church authorities in Sweden, and this was at least partly due to his pietistic leanings and his fervent zeal for the cause of temperance. In America, he was convinced, there was a need for his services, and an opportunity to build up Swedish Lutheran congregations, even to try to regain some of the Erik Janssonites for the Church.⁴

Esbjörn had met O. G. Hedstrom at the Bethel Ship in New York, and also his brother, Jonas Hedstrom, now serving as a Methodist minister in Victoria, Illinois. He had corresponded with them before he left Sweden, seeking information as to how he might be able to serve the Swedish immigrants.⁵

Though Esbjörn must have expected to face some problems and difficulties in America, he no doubt had to endure privations and hardships far beyond what he had imagined. With no congregation organized, with a field of activity that consisted almost entirely of newly-arrived immigrants, all of them struggling for existence, with no financial aid from Sweden nor from any Lutheran group in America, Esbjörn found it necessary to accept help from the American Home Missionary Society, an organization supported by the Congregational Church. This Society granted him \$300.00 annually for two years. If he had not been given this help it would have been impossible for him to carry on his mission work on the frontier of Lutheranism. But, though he was indebted to Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists for some of his spiritual background and for financial assistance, he already was beginning to discover that he could not co-operate with the various churches in America and still remain a Lutheran.

influenced
his life

Scott (Meth.)

Baird (Presb.)

A H M S

Presb. & Congreg.

Hedstrom in Victoria tried to get Esbjörn as his co-laborer in the Methodist Church, but when Esbjörn refused, Hedstrom became his rival and opponent.⁶

The American Home Missionary Society did not require Esbjörn to renounce his Lutheran faith, but he was strictly told that he should not receive any person as a member of the church unless he had proof that the person had been born anew through repentance. To receive members through confirmation was not satisfactory.⁷

It is not surprising that Esbjörn and Eric Norelius, though they had never met before, found much to talk about. Eric was a guest at the supper table. Timidly he sat there and ate the corn meal mush, and pretended to eat the thick sour milk that was served. But after supper the pastor and the young student sat for hours and talked about their experiences, their hopes, their plans. Eric found Pastor Esbjörn to be a man of seriousness and friendliness, sympathetic and willing to help. Eric was concerned about the possibility of continuing his education as soon as possible. Though Esbjörn was unable to give him immediate help he encouraged him and promised to give all possible assistance. Eric was invited to come and stay temporarily at the Esbjörn home until other arrangements could be made. He accepted this kind offer and lived with the Esbjörn's almost a month, helping with various duties, tutoring the younger children, and sometimes going with Rev. Esbjörn to conduct services and meetings in the community.⁸

During this time Esbjörn was busy trying to find a place where Eric could attend school, and also to get some financial help for him. Dr. William Reynolds, president of Capital University, a Lutheran school in Columbus, Ohio, had written to Esbjörn asking if he had any Scandinavian student who would want to come to this school. Now Esbjörn wrote saying that he had found one, though Eric had not yet given his consent, because he did not know what sort of Lutheranism was to be found in this, as yet, unknown institution. Esbjörn also wrote to Dr. W. A. Passavant in Pittsburgh asking for financial assistance for student Norelius, and Passavant sent \$22.00 for this purpose. This act of kindness was the first in a long series of contacts between the prominent Lutheran leader in the East and the young Norelius in the West, contacts which ripened into personal friendship and mutual respect.⁹

However, Eric did not like Esbjörn's methods. He felt that he was a charity guest in the home, and that Esbjörn was assuming too much authority over him. Zealous to maintain his independence and freedom of action he bade the Esbjörn family a friendly farewell and headed for Galesburg, twenty-five miles to the south. He was looking for a job, but jobs were scarce. On December 23, though the snow was falling, he had his first taste of threshing grain in America. A horse power outfit was used. Eric's job was, as might be expected, in the strawstack. His wages: One good meal.¹⁰

Christmas was coming. Back home in Sweden it had been a delightful time, when even the poorest had something extra in the kitchen, and when everybody went to church on the crisp, wintry Christmas morning, torches blazing along the way.

What would Christmas be in America? On the 24th he looked in at Knox College, in Galesburg. There he met a Norwegian student who helped him find a job on a farm. The people spoke only English. With this family Eric spent his first Christmas in America. There was no sign of any Christmas observance. No Christmas goodies on the table, no church services. It was a work day, nothing else. Eric was homesick and miserable.¹¹

The farmer had no steady work for him, so Eric decided to try his fortune in Moline and Rock Island, two villages that had recently sprouted on the bank of the Mississippi River. Discouragement dogged his footsteps as he trudged the weary miles in hope of finding work. As he came to the top of the bluff and looked for the first time on the Father of Waters, his sense of drama and natural beauty was quickened. But he could not foresee the drama of his own life. He could not dream of the Augustana that was to rise on the hillside amid the oaks that grew between Rock Island and Moline. He could not foresee the day when he, dressed in robes of churchly office, would welcome a bishop of the Church of Sweden and with him march at the head of a great procession in festive jubilation and worship.¹²

Such a day was coming, but now he was the poor, lonesome, hungry immigrant boy. He found countrymen in Moline, some old acquaintances, some new friends, and among them he found not only companionship, but a chance to share some meals of pigs' feet that cost only two cents a pound, and bread made in the old Helgeland fashion. Life looked brighter.¹³

Pastor Esbjörn had organized a Swedish Lutheran congrega-

*Ms. 154
Xmas
in Am.
1850*

tion in Moline, in the fall of 1850, and made occasional visits to hold services and administer the sacraments. The meetings were usually held at the home of Carl Johanson, a tailor.¹⁴

Norelius, of course, participated in such gatherings, and Johanson befriended him, helping to find a place for him for the rest of the winter. Early in January Eric received a letter from the Rev. Unonius in Chicago. He urged Norelius to beware of the mere name "Lutheran." "I have found," he wrote, "that the Protestant Episcopal Church is the one that in *all* things most fully corresponds to the Church of Sweden from whose teaching and fellowship I do not want to depart. In one word, I found that that Church is the Church here in this land. . . . When you mentioned that you had a desire to enter the sacred office, it was my intention to offer you a place in one of the seminaries of the Episcopal Church. It was not my intention that you should blindly accept this proposition. I would first have given you information in regard to conditions here and then let you decide. Although you are young you are old enough so that, after being at the Seminary for a time you could have decided if the instruction given there was in harmony with your convictions or not. In the latter case, there would have been no compulsion for you to stay there. You would have had your freedom to leave this institution of learning whenever you so desired. Time did not permit me to talk with you about this, nor do I now have time. But the offer is still open for you. I presume that Pastor Esbjörn will advise you to follow a different course. His views and mine do not agree, that I know. However, my views may be more in agreement with those of the Church of Sweden, whatever he may say against it."¹⁵

In spite of this generous offer, Norelius was willing to live on pig's feet and Helsingland bread for a time, until he was convinced as to where he should go. One day a farmer came into Johanson's tailor shop, and now Eric understood English well enough to grasp that they were talking about him. The result of it was that Eric went with this man to his farm a few miles out of town, near the Rock River. Here he could stay and work for board and room while attending a country school.

The farmer's name was Abraham Hartzel, a German, with an Irish wife. They were Methodists, but seldom went to church during the time Eric was there. He spent three months in this hospitable home, and found them to be friendly, unaffected, and intelligent people. There were six children in the family. In the

home, as well as in the rural school, Eric had daily practice in the English language. The studies in school were elementary, but the high school boy from Sweden, who had already mastered these subjects, was glad to study American history and geography.¹⁶

His stay at Hartzel's helped him to conquer his former dejection and homesickness. It was with regrets that he left this place in the latter part of April.

Eric had been walking to Moline on Sundays, and often assisted Esbjörn in conducting services. He had a number of friends in Moline, among them "Joris Pelle" and his family, who had moved from Andover to Moline in January.

Anderson had not forgotten his long-cherished plan of founding a new Swedish colony. During the winter he corresponded with a former member of the Bishop Hill community, a man by the name of Erik U. Nordberg, who had gone north in the fall to visit the new Minnesota Territory. Nordberg had found a spot where Swedes could settle, around Chisago Lake, ten miles west of Taylors Falls. The description appealed to Anderson, who had a liking for lakes and woods with abundance of fish and game. He and his family, with two other families and two single men, decided to move to this place in Minnesota. They had to wait until navigation opened on the Mississippi, later in April.¹⁷

Eric Norelius knew of these plans and would have liked to go along to Minnesota. But other plans had been made for him. He was going to Columbus, Ohio, to enroll at Capital University. Esbjörn was planning a trip to the eastern states, to solicit money for the erection of churches for the Swedish Lutherans in Illinois. This journey would take him by way of Columbus, and Eric would accompany him to the school that now offered an opportunity for him to complete his education. # Cap. U.

Before Eric left Moline his friends lifted an offering for him, as remuneration for helping with the services. It amounted to \$3.60, the first money he earned for religious services in America.

The journey to Columbus was by river boat down the Mississippi to St. Louis, then up the Ohio River to Cincinnati, and from there by train to Columbus. A stopover of several days was made at Burlington, Iowa. Quite a large number of Swedish people attended a service conducted by Esbjörn at a German church. This was on a Friday evening. On Saturday Esbjörn went to the New Sweden settlement, forty miles northwest of Burlington, to preach on Sunday. Norelius held services in a schoolhouse near Burling-

ton. The settlement visited by Esbjörn had been begun in 1845. In 1848 the settlers called their shoemaker, M. F. Hokanson, a pious and God-fearing man, to be their pastor. This was the beginning of the first congregation of those which in 1860 organized the Lutheran Augustana Synod. At the time of Esbjörn's visit Hokanson was still a layman, but was ordained a few years later.¹⁸

Continuing their journey Esbjörn and Norelius reached St. Louis on May 5, and left the same day on a boat going to Cincinnati. As the boat crawled slowly up the Ohio River Eric observed how the Negro slaves on the Kentucky shore were toiling, and his freedom-loving heart was moved to pity for them.

Esbjörn and Norelius reached Cincinnati on May 9, and the following day went by train to Columbus. They were welcomed at the home of Dr. W. M. Reynolds, president of Capital University. Eric had become ill during the latter part of the trip, and was forced to spend several days in bed at the Reynolds home. As soon as he was able to care for himself he moved to the lodging place assigned to him. Esbjörn went on to visit Lutheran pastors and congregations in the eastern states, and Eric stayed in Columbus, beginning his studies at Capital University on May 26. Having no Swedes as companions he experienced pangs of lonesomeness, but was glad at the opportunities for study and determined to make the best use of his opportunities.¹⁹

NOTES

¹*Early Life*, 117; Rönnegård, *Lars Paul Esbjörn*, 267; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 182.

²Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 77ff., 136f.

³Norelius, *Historia*, I, 61-69; Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 62f., 78.

⁴Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 29ff.

⁵Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 98f., 120.

⁶Norelius, *Historia*, I, 123-143; Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 121f., 135ff.

⁷Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 142ff.

⁸*Early Life*, 117ff.

⁹*Early Life*, 120f.

¹⁰*Early Life*, 122.

¹¹*Early Life*, 122f.

¹²*Early Life*, 125f.

¹³*Early Life*, 128f.

¹⁴*Early Life*, 130.

¹⁵G. Unonius to Norelius, Jan. 7, 1851 (MS).

¹⁶*Early Life*, 124ff.

¹⁷*Early Life*, 134f.; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 541f.

¹⁸*Early Life*, 135ff.; Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 151ff.

¹⁹*Early Life*, 138ff.

Chapter 4

AT CAPITAL UNIVERSITY

CAPITAL UNIVERSITY is today an institution of the American Lutheran Church. This Church was formed in 1930 by the merger of three groups, the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Iowa Synod, and the Buffalo Synod. A theological seminary had been established by the Joint Synod of Ohio in 1830, first located in Canton, and moved the next year to Columbus. In 1850 a collegiate department was added, and was named Capital University. Dr. William Reynolds was the first president. At this institution Eric Norelius was a student 1851-53 and 1854-55, taking courses both in the college and in the seminary.¹

The clothes Eric wore when he came from Sweden had lasted through his first winter in America. Before he left Moline his friend Carl Johanson, the tailor, had procured for him a coat and a pair of trousers of homespun "Kentucky jean" cotton goods, greenish in color, and a winter cap made of dark brown plush. Soon after his arrival in Columbus one of the professors thought his clothes were not quite appropriate to wear among cultured people, and so he rigged him out with an old well-worn suit of clothes, consisting of frock, vest, and trousers, and an old silk hat. The frock was a long coat, cut off at the waist line in front, and in the back reaching below the knees. Though he looked ridiculous and felt miserable he wore this outfit to show his gratitude to the kind professor.²

His school days were a constant struggle against poverty. Before he set out on the journey from Illinois he had been led to think that the institution would provide for his support. Now he learned that the Student Aid Society promised to pay his tuition, board and room and two dollars per week. He was to furnish everything else, clothes, books, laundry expense, etc., and he was to pay for all that he received from the Society if his economic status improved. As time went on he found odd jobs, sawing wood, doing farm work, selling books, even tutoring President Reynolds in Swedish, but none of them very profitable. Occasionally he received gifts of clothing from people who had learned

to know him as a poor but deserving young student. A few dollars came from friends in Illinois.³

In 1852 Dr. Reynolds persuaded Jenny Lind to donate \$1,500.00 to the institution as an endowment fund to support a Scandinavian student. Norelius was the first beneficiary, but of course the money went to the institution, not to him.⁴

The school was housed in an old public school building which had been purchased and equipped for the purpose. Chapel services were held daily in a room on the first floor. Discipline seemed lax to the young student from Sweden who had been accustomed to a school where whippings were administered to the boys. During his first term at Capital University, from May 26 to July 23, Eric concentrated mostly on the study of English and German, since both languages were used for instruction. Church services were also conducted in both languages. An English congregation had just been organized, which met in the college chapel for its services. The pastor was Dr. Emanuel Greenwald who formerly had been pastor of a parish near New Philadelphia, Ohio. One of the theological professors, Rev. William Lehman, was pastor of the German congregation. The students were free to attend Sunday services wherever they chose, and Eric generally alternated between the two. There was no Scandinavian church in Columbus.⁵

It was a period of storm and stress in the Lutheran Church in America. Controversies that had been developing for thirty years were rapidly heading for a crisis.

The question concerned the very essence of Lutheranism. Luther had taught justification by faith alone, good works as fruits of faith, the sacraments as means of grace. In the Augsburg Confession of 1530 the Lutherans had affirmed their position on these and other questions of theology.

During the early years of the American Republic there was a growing feeling of nationalism, which had its effect also on church life. There arose within certain circles of Lutherans in America a feeling that a new sort of Lutheran doctrine and method was to be developed in this country. This movement came to be known under the names of "New Lutheranism" and "American Lutheranism."

Following the Revolutionary War all church denominations in the United States found themselves cut off from the mother churches in Europe, and therefore learning to develop along dis-

tinctly American lines. Co-operation became the watchword of the times, and the various church groups were eager to work together. Though the Lutherans were more slow and conservative in this respect than the Reformed churches, the tendency gradually affected the Lutherans too. Many of the Lutheran pastors began to adopt the methods of the revivalistic preachers. The efficacy of the sacraments was not stressed. The real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper was denied by some, or ignored. Law and gospel, grace and works were confused. Rationalistic pastors came over from Europe and spread abroad a doctrine that was unevangelical and un-Lutheran. In some quarters the inspiration and authority of the Bible were openly denied, the Apostles' Creed was set aside, the Lutheran Confessions were set at naught. Efforts were made to forget all that was distinctive in Lutheran doctrine and practice and to co-operate fully in all things with the Reformed.

In 1820 the General Synod was formed. It adopted no specific statement as to the Lutheran Confessions, but included some of the conservative Lutheran groups as well as some that were zealous for union with the Reformed. In time the General Synod became somewhat more conservative, and it was a defense against rationalism. But there were many Lutherans who never felt that they could conscientiously belong to the General Synod. In fact, the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the oldest Lutheran Synod in this country, which had helped organized the General Synod in 1820, withdrew from it in 1823 and stayed out of it for thirty years.

The Ohio Synod, which was organized in 1818, was about ready to join the General Synod, but reconsidered and never came in. In 1851 the Synod of Northern Illinois was organized, and Pastor Esbjörn (as well as other Swedish Lutheran pastors who came in 1852, 1853, and 1856) joined this Synod, though it belonged to the General Synod. Esbjörn was aware of the fact that the Synod included men who were of the "new Lutheran" type, but he defended his action by saying that the only way to influence the Synod toward a more conservative viewpoint was for the conservatives to get in and labor for their viewpoint.⁶

As stated above, the Ohio Synod never joined the General Synod. However, the feelings in regard to this matter sometimes ran high and there were heated debates on the issue. In general, it was the English-speaking pastors who favored union with the General Synod, while the German-speaking ones were the more

conservative. Eric Norelius had opportunity to hear such a debate in April, 1853. The majority were strongly opposed to union.⁷

Norelius himself was deeply concerned about these matters. He faced the question of his own future church affiliation. In what synod should he seek ordination when he had finished his training? He was a conservative Lutheran, and wanted to belong to a synod that stood on a sound confessional basis. He was not satisfied with the Synod of Northern Illinois, though Esbjörn tried to convince him that through the influence of the Scandinavians it was gradually becoming more conservative. He felt more satisfied with the Ohio Synod, though he knew that some of the members of this group were seeking to draw it in the direction of the General Synod. But if he joined the Ohio Synod he would be separated from the rest of the Scandinavians. He listened to the sermons preached by Greenwald, Lehman, Reynolds, and others of the pastors and professors in Columbus, and made notes in his diary. Seldom, it seems, did he register complete approval. Yet in general he felt at home in the religious atmosphere of the Ohio Synod, and of Capital University. He attended the meetings of student discussion groups, but often bemoaned the fact that the students did not study the symbolical books.⁸

During the first two years of his stay at Capital University Eric did not enroll in any regular class, but studied privately. In April, 1853, he enrolled as a senior, taking Greek, Latin, chemistry, geology, anatomy, algebra, etc. On June 20 he recorded in his diary: "I studied diligently and I dare say that I was just as far advanced as the seniors in every subject, and in several subjects I believe I was ahead of the majority of the class, as for example in Greek and Latin. . . . But when I began to realize that the faculty did not intend to let me graduate this year because I had not been here four years it was hard to be enthusiastic about further studies." The term closed at the end of June, and Norelius left Columbus, doubtful as to whether he would ever return.⁹

During the time he was at Columbus he frequently heard from Esbjörn and other friends in Illinois, and from others in various parts of the country. News reached him that many of his old friends from Sweden, including his own brother Anders, had given up the Lutheran faith and joined the Baptists. The immigrant group that was headed by Per Anderson, and of which Eric Norelius was a member, had conferred with Pastor A. Wiberg in Sweden in the hope that he would come and serve as their pas-

tor when they established a Swedish congregation somewhere in America. Wiberg declined but suggested Pastor Gustaf Palmquist for this assignment. Palmquist agreed to come. However, as we have seen, the plan to stay together as a group and establish a colony did not materialize. And when Palmquist came to America in 1852 there was no Swedish congregation for him to serve. Furthermore, he had in the meantime embraced the Baptist doctrine, as had also Wiberg.

Palmquist became an active missionary for the Baptist Church in Illinois, and also visited Swedish settlements in Iowa and Minnesota. In Rock Island and Moline and elsewhere a number of the formerly "staunch Lutherans" became Baptists. Esbjörn was worried about Norelius and wrote him a long letter, urging him to remain faithful to the Lutheran Church. Norelius assured him that his fears were groundless. Rev. Wiberg called on Norelius at Columbus and they had a long discussion about their religious views. In spite of their different doctrines they had a pleasant evening. They remained friends and met again on later occasions.¹⁰

It is significant that in the midst of the troubles with the Baptists Esbjörn felt compelled as never before to restudy the symbolical books of the Lutheran Church. Norelius was of the opinion that Esbjörn's genuinely Lutheran viewpoint dates from this time.¹¹

In spite of being always hounded by poverty and often by poor health, Norelius had made good use of his time at Capital University. He had a working knowledge of three modern languages and was well versed in Latin and Greek. He also took an interest in science and in history and government. He had begun to see the meaning of American politics and had come to the conclusion that he favored the Whig party. He often heard visiting speakers, political leaders as well as churchmen. He had visited a session of the Ohio legislature, but was rather surprised and disappointed at the lack of dignity. He had attended the state fair where he was astonished at the quality of the products exhibited, especially the livestock.¹²

It was Eric's hope to return to Sweden after a few years in America, and to serve in the Church of his fatherland. But unexpected events brought about a change in his plans. On May 7, 1853 he received a letter from his parents in Sweden, informing him that they and his brothers and sisters were ready to leave

for America. Therefore, at the end of the school term in June he went to New York to meet them and to help them as they journeyed inland from there. The period of waiting in New York proved to be much longer than he had expected.¹³

NOTES

¹Wentz, *The Lutheran Church in American History*, 172-173; *Early Life*, 143, 192, 241, 256.

²*Early Life*, 135, 142.

³*Early Life*, 141, 145, 148, 150, 160.

⁴*Early Life*, 152.

⁵*Early Life*, 143, 144.

⁶Wentz, *The Lutheran Church in American History*, 95, 115ff., 129f.; Stephenson, *The Founding of the Augustana Synod*, 14ff.

⁷*Early Life*, 186f.

⁸*Early Life*, 168, 177, 187, 252ff.

⁹*Early Life*, 189, 192.

¹⁰*Early Life*, 177, 189ff., 204ff.; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 150ff.; Rönnegård, *Esbjörn*, 217ff.

¹¹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 160.

¹²*Early Life*, 150, 158ff., 171, 175, 176, 181; *En Minnesbok* (MS).

¹³*Early Life*, 187f.

Chapter 5

DISAPPOINTMENTS AND HOPE

THE PARENTS of Eric Norelius were Anders Pehrson and his wife Elizabeth. Their home was a farm near the village of Norrbäck, in the parish of Hassela, in the northern part of Helsingland, one of the central provinces in Sweden. It was here that Eric was born on October 26, 1833. When he and his brother Anders left for America they thought the farm at Norrbäck would always be their old home to which they could return at least in fond memory and imagination. This dream was shattered about a year after Eric came to America, when a letter arrived from his parents with the news that they had sold the old home and moved a few miles north into the province of Medelpad. Their intention, when they sold their home, was to emigrate to America, but a man who previously had emigrated returned with discouraging news about conditions in America, and they were persuaded to stay in Sweden.¹

However, on May 7, 1853 Eric received a letter saying that they had decided to come to America. Never again would there be a fond tie with the place where his cradle had stood and where he had played in his childhood days. Could he ever call any place his own? Would he ever have a home on earth?

There was more to do, however, than to dream nostalgic dreams. Now that his parents and his brothers and sisters were on the way to America there were practical problems to face. He knew how it was to come as a stranger to a new land, without any knowledge of the language, without friends, and at the mercy of unscrupulous sharpsters. He wanted to be at the dock in New York to welcome his loved ones and to be their guide until they were settled in the new land.

Coming to New York on July 13 he went to the home of a Lutheran pastor, Dr. H. I. Schmidt, whose name and address had been given to him by Dr. Reynolds in Columbus. It was a fine home, and the tired, dusty young traveler was somewhat dubiously received. He was grateful for an invitation to dinner, and tried to eat daintily. Then he obtained the address of a German bookseller, Mr. H. Ludwig on Vesey Street. He found him and

after getting an invitation to stay over night at Ludwig's home he went to the docks to learn if any Swedish immigrants had arrived or were expected. The following day he looked up an English Lutheran pastor, Dr. J. Schoch, who gave him a friendly welcome. He was pastor of St. James English Lutheran Church, and gave Eric an opportunity to try to sell subscriptions to the *Lutheran Standard*, the organ of the Ohio Synod.

Since his relatives had not arrived and no one knew when to expect them Eric tried to earn some money by selling books. Obtaining a load of religious books from Mr. Ludwig, Eric went to Easton, Pennsylvania, where Dr. C. F. Schaeffer was pastor of a German Lutheran church and Rev. Chas. Smith served an English Lutheran congregation. Neither one gave him the slightest encouragement about selling books in Easton. He stayed over night at a rooming house and then went out to the country to sell books. After a week of wandering up and down the hills he had disposed of most of his books, but usually at a reduction in price so his commission was barely enough to cover his expenses. He met many New Lutherans, who made fun of his books. Eric felt that this experience as a book agent had been a valuable lesson in the matter of learning at first hand the thoughts and intents of people.

Back in New York again on July 22 he still could get no further information about his relatives. Knowing that the Rev. A. Wiberg was in New York Eric looked him up and was met with friendliness and solicitude. Wiberg took Norelius to the home of a rich ship owner, a Mr. Smith, who had an office on Wall Street. He was a zealous member of the Baptist Church, and Wiberg was a highly respected guest in the palatial Smith home. Eric, though poorly dressed and feeling out of place, also was invited to eat at their table, and for the first and only time in his life ate with a gold knife and gold fork.²

Mr. Smith hired Eric to work as office boy, at two dollars a week, which was enough to provide a very meager board, but nothing for other necessities. He worked at this job until August 30, and was often entrusted with important duties. As errand boy for his employer he often carried large bundles of currency and bags of gold to banks or other business houses. In his desperate attempts to earn a little extra money Eric wrote poems and tried to get them published, but all to no avail, and his hope of meeting his relatives also proved to be in vain. At last, on September

12 he decided he could stay no longer, and borrowed \$6.50 from Dr. Schoch for a ticket to Chicago.

After a tiresome five-day trip Eric reached Chicago on the 17th. He found the city "growing, growing, growing, so fast that it is almost unbelievable."³

While Eric was in New York he had heard that a Swedish Lutheran pastor, with a company of immigrants, had arrived and had gone on to Chicago. Eric's first desire was to look up this new pastor, and he found him living "with a fine Norwegian family on Des Plaines Street." Eric was welcomed with such love and kindness that he was almost overwhelmed. Pastor Carlsson had more than kind words to offer. He insisted that Eric stay and share his bed and board. The penniless, ragged, hungry student was lifted out of his despair. The following day, which was Sunday, he had a "wonderfully precious hour" when he could sit and hear a Swedish Lutheran service, with a good, doctrinal sermon, a privilege which he had not had for three years.⁴

Erland Carlsson was at this time thirty-one years of age. In spite of poverty and hardship he had secured an education and had been ordained to the ministry of the Church of Sweden in 1849. He was an excellent preacher and a devoted pastor and won many friends in his parish. In 1853 a congregation was organized by Swedish Lutherans in Chicago, and a call was sent to Sweden, to Dr. Peter Fjellstedt, head of a Mission Institute in Lund, with the request that he should give the call to the man of his choice. He gave it to Erland Carlsson. Carlsson accepted, and sailed for America on June 3. A company of 176 of his friends, many of them his parishioners, emigrated with him. Carlsson reached Chicago on August 22, and was welcomed at the station by a group of members of his new congregation. Services were held at first in the Norwegian Lutheran Church. It was here Norelius received balm for his soul and a lift for his whole being when he heard Carlsson preach.⁵

Arrangements were soon made for Norelius to stay and serve as parochial school teacher in Chicago. From September 26 until November 1 he taught in a Norwegian chapel that stood out on a plain on the north side. He conducted the services for Carlsson's congregation a couple of times, in the pastor's absence. Early in November he received a letter informing him that his relatives had arrived in New York, and on the evening of the 13th they were in Chicago. He hurried to meet them, but his joy at

not to
Chicago

Erland
Carlsson

seeing them was mingled with sorrow at the thought that their old home was no longer theirs, and that they all were strangers in a strange land. He helped them find lodging and employment, as it was deemed best that they stay in Chicago over the winter. However, Eric's brother Anders came in December and persuaded his relatives to go with him to Moline, all except the oldest brother, Per and his family.⁶

Eric had rented a room near the Kinzie Street bridge and started another term of school, working for a time with children and later with adults. (Among his adult pupils was one Håkan Swedberg, of whom we shall hear more later.) This kept him busy until the latter part of March, 1854, and gave him the chance to earn a few dollars. Then, bidding farewell to his friends in Chicago, he went to Andover for a visit with Esbjörn. It was three years since they last saw each other, and Norelius felt it as a precious privilege to be in Esbjörn's home again and to see the significant changes that had taken place in the Andover community. A brick church had been erected, but more important was the fact that the people seemed to have become more churchly. After visits in Moline and at Bishop Hill, Norelius was ready to embark on a journey that gave promise of an interesting summer for him.⁷

NOTES

¹*Early Life*, 10, 11, 13; Per Anderson to Norelius, Jan. 1, 1852 (MS).

²*Early Life*, 196-205.

³*Early Life*, 204-214.

⁴*Early Life*, 212-215.

⁵Norelius, *Historia*, I, 373f., 405ff.

⁶*Early Life*, 216-220.

⁷*Early Life*, 220-230.

Chapter 6

A SUMMER IN MINNESOTA

ERIC'S old friend, Per Anderson (Joris Pelle) had now been living at Chisago Lake, Minnesota, almost three years. While Eric was at school in Columbus he received letters from Anderson occasionally, telling of the beauty of the place, the wonderful climate, the fertility of the soil, the coming of more settlers, but, also, the distress of the sheep without a shepherd. The first letter was dated September 7, 1851, and reads in part as follows:

"We are now living near the big lake in Minnesota which we saw last winter on E. U. Norberg's map. It is even more remarkable in its nature than it appeared on the map, with a number of islands and several peninsulas . . . and plenty of room for a large settlement. The soil is quite good and fertile. The land is forested, no dry prairies; suitable for cultivation, but a number of rather wet areas with excellent grass. Good forest for every need for a farmer. The land is generally level, somewhat more hilly around the lake and sloping down to the lake. We are now ten who have begun farms here, nine Swedes and one American. We are only three who have families, namely P. Wiklund, P. Berg, and I. The others are single men. But I hope that the population here will soon increase considerably, for here is room for several parishes, and a glorious and healthful climate. It is of course somewhat difficult for us the first year to get things in order out in the wilderness, while we have ten miles to the nearest neighbors, and they are new settlers with farms three or four years old. But they are now in good circumstances. Food is more expensive here than in Illinois. A barrel of flour costs 5 to 6 dollars here, pork 10 to 12 cents per pound. A laborer is paid 20, 25, to 30 dollars a month, about the same all the year around. We expect that we shall farm here with good success, if we may have health and all goes well—in a word, according to my opinion, this is the most suitable place I have seen for Swedes to settle, however not the first year but in the future. Good fishing and hunting are not lacking here. But as to church matters I must say that it is at present dismal, since there are so few, scarcely anyone to talk to about the unmerited grace in Christ—only Nor-

berg has a little light. The others are wholly and completely a blind world. Therefore there are no struggles here; but everything rather dead in religious matters. But I hope that He will soon establish a congregation here. . . . We have written to New York, to Swedish immigrants who come, both acquaintances and strangers, advising them to come to Minnesota, since we are convinced that the land is good and most suitable for Northmen. We sent the letter to Unonius in Chicago and asked him to recommend it to someone of his acquaintance in New York, who would give the information to immigrants arriving there, which he will surely do since he previously has made a decision to direct Swedes to Minnesota. . . . I have some news to tell you, namely, that a Swedish tailor came up to St. Paul this summer from New York. . . . My advice to you is that you try to learn the things that are necessary and then come up to us here in the North. I have not heard anything about whether Palmquist is coming or not. If he does not come perhaps the Lord has chosen you to work in His harvest here in this region. May the Lord direct all things aright. . . ."¹

Services were held outdoors until the new Anderson log cabin was completed in November. The house was built in Swedish style and aroused the wonder of the American neighbor. In this house divine service was held for the first time on Advent Sunday, November 30, and again on Christmas Day, and on New Year's Day, 1852. Anderson had heard that the Rev. Gustaf Palmquist had arrived in America, and intended to come to Minnesota the following summer. New settlers were also expected at Chisago Lake.²

Anderson was longing for Palmquist's coming "as the bird waits for the dawn," but he was afraid that Swedish settlers in Iowa might persuade him to stay there and forget Minnesota.³ In July Anderson paid his Iowa friends a visit, and to his great consternation and disappointment learned that Palmquist had turned to the Baptist faith, and was winning others to the same belief. Palmquist had been on the way to Chisago Lake, and had reached Stillwater, but there was no boat from Stillwater to Taylors Falls, and Palmquist did not want to walk thirty miles to Chisago Lake. Anderson himself had often walked to Stillwater, and so had others. Anderson was not in the least willing to yield on his view of baptism, and even was convinced that if a child were born in

the community someone of the settlers should baptize the child, since no pastor was available.⁴

On September 17 Chisago Lake had the "honor" of seeing an ordained clergyman for the first time, when Unonius of Chicago paid them a visit, preached, and administered the Lord's Supper. On the very day that Unonius came a letter from Norelius reached Per Anderson, in which he defended the Lutheran teaching on baptism. Anderson showed the letter to Unonius, who gave his full approval and asked Anderson to share its contents with the assembled settlers. Unonius added the further warning that no layman should perform the rite of baptism. Anderson, however, was not convinced that Unonius was right in this, and again wrote to Norelius saying that if the need should ever arise a layman could baptize a child.⁵

Per Anderson may have had some suspicion that such a need would actually arise. On November 12 his wife gave birth to a daughter. The father tried to persuade a God-fearing neighbor, Carl Carlsson, to perform the baptism. Carlsson declined, not because of theological objections, but he thought Anderson himself should do it. So on November 16, 1852, little Christina was baptized by her own father, according to the old Swedish Lutheran ritual. Anderson was eager to have Norelius come to Chisago Lake, and Norelius had given some hope that he might come the following summer.⁶

Unonius wrote to Anderson offering to come to Chisago Lake as pastor. Anderson did not want him, though he knew that most of the people in the community wanted him.⁷

Though Norelius' intention of coming to Minnesota in 1853 was changed when he decided to go to New York, he carried on a regular correspondence with Anderson, who continued to inform him of happenings in the community, new settlers arriving, activities of the Baptists, etc. Anderson was expecting relatives from Sweden, as were several others of the Chisago Lake people, and Anderson expressed the hope that these might all come at the same time so that Norelius could serve as guide to a large company of settlers bound for Chisago Lake. But he warned Norelius that if too many people came late in the fall there would be serious difficulty in finding room and board for all.⁸

As we have seen, Eric waited in vain in New York. His parents did not come until in November, and spent the winter in Illinois. But other Swedish immigrants had come to Chisago

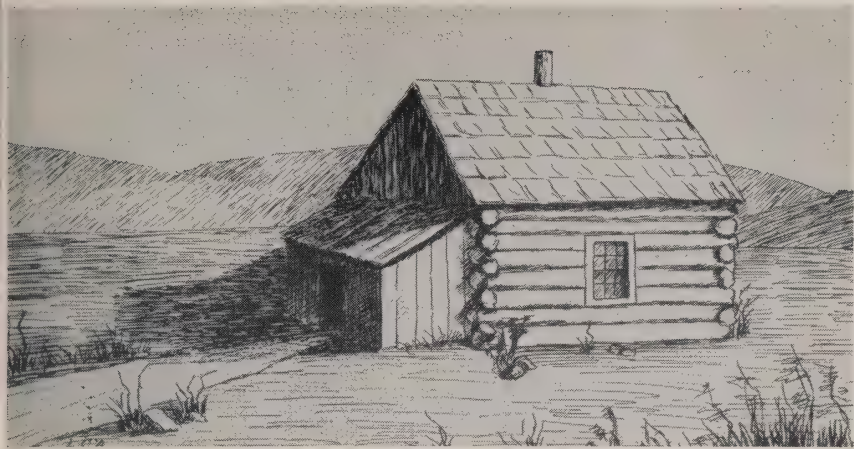
Lake in the summer of 1853, including some of the shipmates of Rev. Erland Carlsson. One of these was Daniel Peterson, who in January, 1854 wrote as follows to Pastor Carlsson in Chicago:

"We have what we need for our bodily life, but we need help for our spiritual life. We come together every Sunday, read and sing, but we need more edification for the soul. We have had a minister here by the name of Agrelius. He proclaimed the word of God well, but we did not generally dare to partake of the Lord's Supper, since he has a different religion, but we long for Pastor Erl. Carlsson's coming in the spring. I hope the pastor comes; we will pay him for the trip. I wish he would come and stay with me while he visits here in our settlement."⁹

A few weeks later (March 18, 1854) a group of five Swedes in St. Paul wrote to T. N. Hasselquist, pastor in Galesburg, Illinois, stating their desire of having him come for a visit to help them organize a Lutheran congregation. They reported that there were 150 Swedes in St. Paul, 200 at Chisago Lake, 100 at Marine, and 150 at other places. Two Methodist pastors, Agrelius and Tidlund, have been seeking to win adherents but have had no great success.¹⁰

When Hasselquist learned that Erland Carlsson was already planning a missionary journey to Minnesota in the spring Hasselquist decided to wait and go at some later date. Consequently Erland Carlsson became the first Lutheran pastor to visit Minnesota. His journey resulted in the organization of three Lutheran congregations, First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, on May 6; Chisago Lake Lutheran Church, Center City, on May 12; and Swedish Lutheran, Marine (now Elim Lutheran, Scandia), on May 19. Carlsson stayed about a week in each place, and then returned to Chicago.¹¹

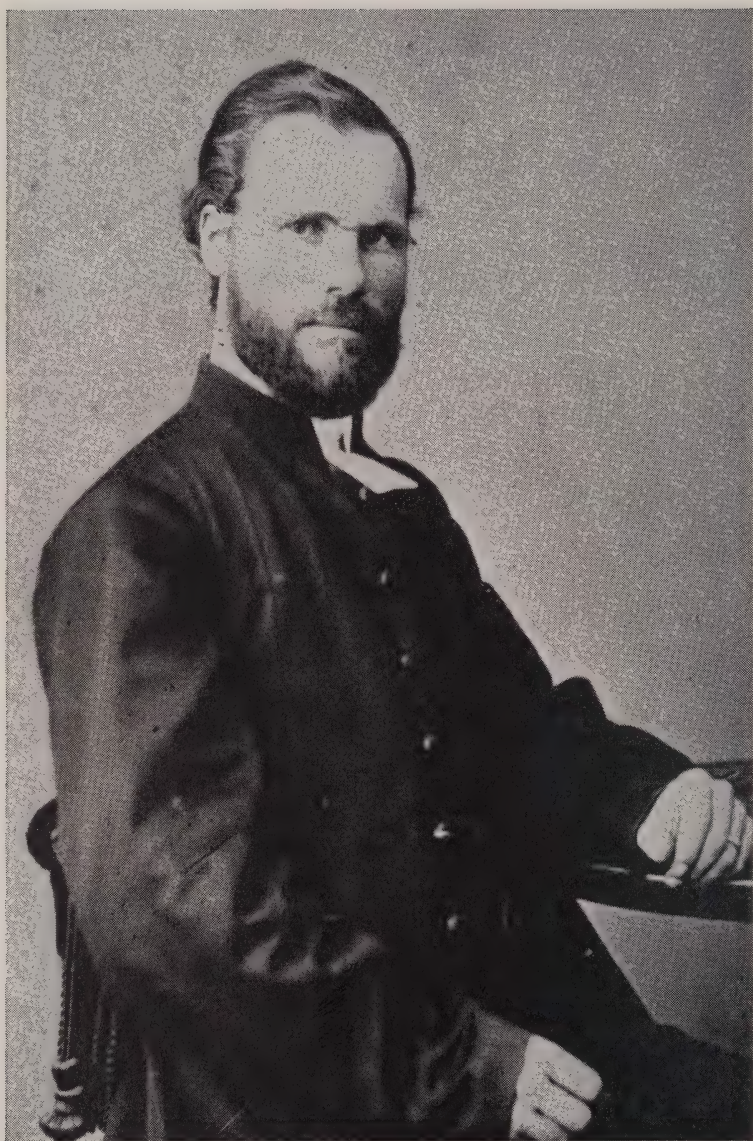
When Carlsson set out by boat from Moline on his journey to Minnesota, Eric Norelius had intended to go with him, but he was in Andover when he heard of Carlsson's plans, and by the time he reached Moline Carlsson had left. On May 15 another boat came along and Eric and his relatives and a few other people went on board, ten persons in all. A six day journey up the Mississippi brought them to St. Paul, which at that time was a city of some 6,000 people. It was Sunday afternoon when the boat docked. Among the people at the boat landing Eric found a few Swedes, who reported that Erland Carlsson had been there, and had gone up to Chisago Lake. They brought Eric to Frank Mo-



The log house in which the Vasa pioneers worshiped from 1856 until 1862.



The original church of the First Lutheran congregation, Red Wing, built 1856 and used until 1865.



Norelius in 1868, on his visit to Sweden.

beck, and it was agreed that a service should be held that evening. Norelius' first sermon in Minnesota was delivered in a little school-house on Jackson Street, "quite a number of people" being in attendance.¹²

On Monday, May 22, the boat left for Stillwater, arriving in the evening. After spending the night on the boat landing under the open sky, Norelius rode on the mail stage to Taylors Falls, and the following day, May 24, walked nine miles through the forest to Chisago Lake. The colony which had been founded by Per Anderson just three years previously, now numbered about 200 persons.¹³

The Chisago Lake congregation had been organized under Erland Carlsson's leadership on May 12, and he left before Norelius arrived. It was now agreed that Norelius should stay through the summer, preach on Sundays, teach school and visit some of the near-by settlements as time would permit. He found it to be a pleasant and interesting summer, though two other preachers offered competition for the people's attention, and though he felt that some of the church members were not entirely satisfied with his sermons. The services generally were held in Per Berg's newly built haymow (or threshing floor) which Berg had generously offered for a meeting place. It was here the congregation had been organized.¹⁴

One Sunday, as Norelius came to the log house that served as a church he met a dignified, gray haired man who introduced himself as Pastor Agrelius, formerly of the Church of Sweden, now in the service of the Methodist Church. Though Eric had neither any right nor inclination to invite him to preach to the congregation, this did not deter the visiting preacher from letting his light shine. As soon as Norelius had finished his service, Agrelius stood up and delivered another sermon. Through most of the summer he tried to brighten this corner of the universe, though without any success to speak of. Another visitor in the community the same summer was a Baptist minister, Fredrik O. Nilson, the first man to preach the Baptist doctrine in Sweden. He was exiled for this violation of the Church laws, and came to America. He stayed only a week in Chisago Lake, and won no adherents.¹⁵

During the summer Norelius also conducted services at the Swedish colony fifteen miles south of Chisago Lake, known as the Marine settlement. This colony was the original Swedish

settlement in Minnesota. Three single men, Carl A. Fernstrom, Oscar Roos, and August Sandahl, built a cabin near Hay Lake, in the northern part of Washington County, in October, 1850, and stayed until the following spring. Later that year their claim was sold to Daniel Nilson, who came with his family from Illinois and began farming. In his home Erland Carlsson met with the settlers to organize a congregation, and there Norelius held services in the summer of 1854. He also visited Taylors Falls occasionally.¹⁶

The first settlers at Chisago Lake had chosen attractive spots along the lakeshore in the vicinity of the present village of Center City. Most of the region was covered with hardwood forests, maple, oak, elm, basswood, and a variety of smaller trees. Land was cleared in winter and the trees were burned in spring, except those needed for fuel or building material. Then between the stumps the soil was tilled with a hoe and the little patches of field planted, the principal crops being wheat and corn. Garden products included tomatoes, cucumbers, and other vegetables. Per Anderson planted apple trees in 1852.¹⁷

Eric found time to explore the region several miles around. He helped his parents buy a forty acre farm at Little Lake, two miles from Chisago Lake. He helped Daniel Lindstrom, a half brother of Per Anderson, to get pre-emption papers on a tract of land where the village of Lindstrom is situated. He also explored the woods around Sunrise Lake and a few miles farther north the "Sunrise prairies." Such journeys delighted the heart of the twenty year old youth whose boyhood had been spent largely in the woods of northern Helsingland.¹⁸

In an autobiographical article written some thirty-five years later Norelius told of an incident that happened in the Chisago Lake community in 1854 and which reveals in an amusing way how he was led to examine himself. This is the story as Norelius told it:

"Among the best and most cherished memories from Chisago Lake in the summer of 1854 is how I learned not to play the gentleman.

"Taken out of the farmer's cottage in the forests of Helsingland and thrown suddenly into the great stream of world civilization, the 'gentleman' in me could not be seen much in my manners or in outward behavior. But, especially in the old country, the thought of being something more than the common man would

arise in proportion to one's increase in knowledge. Such thoughts had certainly come into my mind during my school days; but they were in direct opposition to my natural inclination. I felt, as did the people of my home community in general, a strong dislike for class distinction and hated the pretensions and fussiness of the so-called better class. I was certainly no admirer of the Cynical school of thought; but I had read Rousseau and felt not a little impressed by his naturalism, and I thought it could be given a Christian interpretation. Doesn't Christianity teach that the Christians are brethren and equals? This I wanted to hold to, not only in theory but also in practice. I wanted it so that in my inmost feelings I could live and be socially as the Christians in general and feel perfectly at home and content. Perhaps it would have been all right if I hadn't had to preach; but to be on familiar terms with everybody all week, and then on Sunday appear before the same group of people as preacher and teacher, it was this that made it seem difficult to make the two agree. That the Christians are brethren, yes, that is true; but that the pastor should have the respect of the people among whom he works, in order to work with any blessing, that also seems proper and necessary.

"So I went and pondered on these matters, and thought like this: I am on the way to become a minister, and although a minister is not a lord over the congregation, yet because of his position he is a person looked up to by the congregation, in certain respects, and must not this also be seen in the social life? Must not the minister, also here in this country act the 'gentleman'?

"Dressed in light blue denim overalls and with a tamarack sapling as a walking stick I was going along the road one evening after school was dismissed. As I pondered on these and other thoughts, I met on a corduroy road over a slough, a self-effacing little man. It was Gustaf Collin, newly arrived in the settlement, a true disciple of Sellergren, or more correctly, of the humble, great Master from Nazareth, 'an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.' He took off his cap, bowed, spoke to me with humble reverence, calling me 'Master.' His whole bearing, especially his clear blue eyes, expressed such complete sincerity of soul, such honesty and integrity, that it was impossible for me to interpret his actions as a mockery of my insignificance. But there was too much of a contrast between my outward appearance and the title he had given me. And that rogue, the 'gentleman' who lay sly

and furtive in my mind, was now so openly caught in the act that it could not but have a good effect. I believe that the 'gentleman' evaporated and the honest man, unknowingly, helped me to solve a problem that is quite difficult for some. But how? That doesn't belong here."¹⁹

NOTES

¹Mss letter, in possession of the author.

²Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Jan. 1, 1852.

³Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, March 21, 1852 (MS).

⁴Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Aug. 8, 1852 (MS).

⁵Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Sept. 17, 1852 (MS).

⁶Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Nov. 21, 1852 (MS).

⁷Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Feb. 9, 1853 (MS).

⁸Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Aug. 7, 1853 (MS).

⁹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 559.

¹⁰The letter was signed by Frank Mobeck, C. J. Lindstrom, C. A. Hedengran, P. M. Anderson and A. J. Ekman. The letter is found in full in Norelius, *Historia*, I, 613.

¹¹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 561, 604, 613.

¹²*Early Life*, 231f.

¹³*Early Life*, 232f.; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 612.

¹⁴*Early Life*, 233ff.; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 561.

¹⁵*Early Life*, 233ff.

¹⁶Lund, *Minn. Konf.*, I, 11f.; Norelius, *Historia*, I, 604; *Early Life*, 235.

¹⁷Per Anderson to Eric Norelius, Sept. 17, 1852, Nov. 21, 1852.

¹⁸*Early Life*, 238f.

¹⁹*Korsbaneret*, Vol. 9, 130ff.

Chapter 7

A BRIDE AND A PARISH

NORELIUS preached his farewell sermon to the Chicago Lake people on September 10, on the text, Revelation 3:14-22. The congregation paid him \$25.00 for his three and a half months' service as preacher and teacher. Probably the summer's many interesting experiences constituted more adequate compensation. He had learned to like Minnesota.

On his return to Illinois he found that many of his friends had suffered from illness. Cholera was taking its terrible toll, especially among newly arrived immigrants. After a visit with Esbjörn and the Andover congregation, Norelius set out for Columbus to continue his education at Capital University. Esbjörn's youngest son, Joseph, went with him.

Going by way of Chicago, Norelius called on Erland Carlsson and met a newly arrived Swede by the name of Andreen, who later became a pastor and the father of Gustav Andreen. Norelius learned that Carlsson and Andreen had visited a colony of Swedes around Lafayette, Indiana. Since this was not far out of the way on Eric's journey to Columbus, he was asked to pay them a visit. This he did, and found a large number of Swedes living in Lafayette, West Point, Attica, Montmorency, and Yorktown. West Point being the most central place, he rented a Methodist Church and on October 8 preached to a large audience.¹

He found among these people a very hearty and sincere welcome, as they showed him much personal kindness and also a desire to hear the Word of God. One of the leaders among them, a sort of spiritual father, known as a serious-minded and zealous Christian, was Peter Peterson. While in Sweden he and his sister had spent two weeks in prison because they had violated the Conventicle Act, which forbade religious gatherings in the homes.

One day, as Eric sat talking with Peterson he chanced to look through the window and saw two girls walking toward the house, their faces half hidden by their "shakers" which then were the usual fashion. Something clicked in young Eric's heart. It seemed to say, "One of these girls is to be your wife."

He soon had a closer look at her, as she came in. She was

introduced to him as Inga Lotta, the youngest daughter of the Peterson's. She was going on seventeen. Eric noticed that she was shy, and that she was respectful toward her parents. The light of purity and innocence shone in her appearance, and she seemed mature for her age. Though Eric did not yet admit what had happened to his heart, the image of her face stayed in his mind as he went on his way to Columbus. He had hopes of seeing her again, for the people asked him to come and preach again at Christmas time.

Eric now went to Columbus to enter school at the beginning of the fall term. Just before the opening of school a revolution had taken place in the administration and faculty. The president, Dr. Reynolds, and the professors who sided with him had resigned and left. The reason was partly the question of whether the Joint Synod of Ohio should join the General Synod. Dr. Reynolds had favored this step, but was overruled by the opposing group.

With Rev. Spielman and Professor Lehman as the new leaders in the church and school affairs, order was restored after the upheaval. Eric applied himself with eagerness to his studies, glad to be back in school again after an absence of more than a year. Then came sad news from Indiana. Cholera had ravaged the Swedish settlements, and one of the victims was Peter Peterson. While working in the field one day he was stricken and died within a few hours. Knowing the end was near he committed his loved ones to the Lord and died in faith.

According to his promise Eric spent Christmas and New Year's with his friends in Indiana. Calling on the Peterson family to bring them consolation in their bereavement, he also found himself consoled to see that Inga Lotta was just as sweet and pure in December as he had found her to be in October. This time he couldn't keep it to himself. One day, under the apple tree that grew by the side of the house, she said, "Yes, if it is God's will."²

On his return to Columbus early in January Eric was surprised to find his cousin, Jonas Engberg, ready to enroll in the school, but having just come from Sweden he could not understand English sufficiently to profit by the attempt to take college studies. He went to Chicago, then to Galesburg, and became an assistant to Hasselquist in the publishing of a Swedish paper, *Hemlandet*, (The Homeland), a venture which had its beginning just at that time.

Beginning with the winter term Norelius devoted himself entirely to theological studies, including Church history, dogmatics, ethics, homiletics, catechetics, pastoral theology, and symbolics.

Poverty, which was an old acquaintance of Eric's, was still with him. He had no time to work at odd jobs now, and it was supposed to be out of place for a divinity student to take menial tasks. He borrowed twenty dollars, but did not dare to go any deeper into debt. To add to his problems he had as a roommate a fellow by the name of Mutschelknaus who was a chain smoker. He offered Eric free tobacco and told him he would have to smoke if he was to live with him. Once before Eric had tried but got sick and gave up. Now he stuck to it, in spite of the strong tobacco furnished, and became a habitual smoker for the next 38 years.³

At Easter time, 1855, Norelius quit school, somewhat abruptly, but not on a sudden impulse. For some time he had been considering whether to join the Ohio Synod and seek ordination in that church body, or join the Synod of Northern Illinois, as the Swedish Lutheran, and some of the Norwegian Lutheran pastors in Illinois had done. The Ohio Synod stood officially on the Lutheran Confessions. The Synod of Northern Illinois was not clear on this point, but Esbjörn, Hasselquist, and Carlsson had stipulated that they stood on the Augsburg Confession.

Norelius wrote to Esbjörn about these matters, and in March had a reply in which Esbjörn defended his and the other pastors' adherence to the Synod of Northern Illinois, claiming that their conservatism was exerting a good influence on the whole synod. Esbjörn urged Norelius to join the Synod of Northern Illinois and make a public declaration of his confessional stand, as he himself had done. Esbjörn was convinced that the Synod was already on the way to greater conservatism.⁴

Norelius was not convinced of the soundness of Esbjörn's position. He was still undecided when he went to spend Easter vacation with his friends in Indiana. Easter was on April 8. During Holy Week he conducted services day after day in the various settlements, riding around in a rickety wagon that sometimes collapsed under him. On the day before Easter he wrote to Rev. Spielman:

"You can scarcely imagine the joy that I have witnessed during these days among my countrymen over my coming here. They want me to stay without condition (a too literal rendition of the

Swedish word *ovillkorligen*, meaning they were very insistent) and tell me I do wrong if I leave them. Their want of a pastor is very great indeed and seeing this want, I think I should not leave them, if it possibly could be avoided. Well, I have been thinking much about this matter lately, whether I ought not to stay here under such circumstances. But I will commit it to God, to do with me as He please, and you shall be informed of my course as soon as possible. I have concluded to go to Chicago on Wednesday next and confer with the brethren there.”⁵

The meeting with brethren in Chicago was the convention of the combined Chicago and Mississippi Conferences of the Synod of Northern Illinois, held in the Swedish Lutheran Church, April 12-15. Esbjörn, Hasselquist, Carlsson were present, as well as two Norwegian pastors. The minutes of the meeting show that Eric Norelius now applied for examination, was duly examined, and given ad interim license to preach. In the Synod of Northern Illinois this was a preparatory step to ordination. His license, signed by Simeon W. Harkey, president of the synod, was dated April 15, 1855.⁶

The license gave him full authority to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. He now returned to Indiana, to serve the people who had urgently pleaded with him to become their pastor. Erland Carlsson had been there in February and had organized a congregation at West Point. There were four other preaching places.⁷

Within a few days after his return to Indiana he received a letter from President Spielman in Columbus, recognizing the fact that Norelius had acted rightly in remaining with the people in Indiana.⁸

Norelius had no official call from the congregation, but was sent by the Conference. When he reported this to the congregation they gladly welcomed him, and efforts were made to pay him. The goal was set at \$2.00 per year per communicant, which would have been \$270.00, but this amount was not paid in full. Few of the Swedes owned any land. Most of them worked for farmers who had been there twenty or thirty years and were now doing well. As hired hands they had slight hope of getting ahead, for the land was rather high priced. Scattered far apart, they had to go ten or fifteen miles to attend services. Some walked long distances, others came on horseback, riding on borrowed horses. Since there were five preaching places it was agreed that each place

should be visited in order, each place having services every fifth Sunday. The pastor found it necessary to hire horses for his trips, or to walk. Summer weather was hot. Roads were often impassable. The people were kindhearted and generally pious, but the situation was such that they began to consider the possibility of moving to a different part of the country. This plan pleased Norelius and the place that beckoned to him as a promised land was Minnesota.

Before preparations were begun for the proposed exodus, Eric and Inga Lotta were married, on June 10. He was twenty-one, she was seventeen. It was the beginning of a union that lasted more than sixty years.

Leaving his young wife in Indiana, Norelius went on a journey of exploration. His companion in this venture of spying out the land was Nils Hokanson, one of the deacons at West Point. Norelius knew the way to Minnesota. The railroad went from Chicago to Dunleith, Illinois, on the Mississippi. Coming up the river they decided to stop off at Red Wing, which was then a boom town, only three years old, and growing rapidly. This place and the surrounding region, with its scenic beauty, appealed to Norelius, and in time his name was to become closely associated with these regions, especially in the establishment and development of the Lutheran Church in these parts.⁹

NOTES

¹*Early Life*, 240ff.

²*Early Life*, 245ff.; Eric Norelius to "Dear Mother and all who are ours home in Red Wing," Nov. 26, 1858 (MS).

³*Early Life*, 249ff.

⁴*Early Life*, 252ff.

⁵Eric Norelius to C. Spielman, April 7, 1855 (MS).

⁶*Early Life*, 256ff.; Minutes of Chicago and Mississippi Conferences, in *Augustana Historical Society Publication*, X, 103ff.

⁷*Early Life*, 258.

⁸*Early Life*, 259f.

⁹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 499ff.; Lund, *Minn. Konf.*, I, 34.

Chapter 8

FINDING A NEW FIELD

RED WING was the name of an Indian chief, and Red Wing's village stood where the city of Red Wing now stands. In 1851 that part of Minnesota was included in the tremendously valuable land ceded by the Sioux to the United States by the Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota. The Indians were assigned to a reservation along the upper reaches of the Minnesota River, in western Minnesota. A few of them still lingered, loath to leave the land they loved.

Inexorably their ancestral hills and valleys were being occupied by the white men. Even the graves of the red men's ancestors were unceremoniously pushed aside as the white men excavated for new buildings.

The first Swedish settlers had come to this region in 1853, the leader of them being Hans Mattson.

On August 31, 1855, late in the evening, Norelius and Hokanson landed in Red Wing. Up early the next morning Eric sprinted up Barn Bluff to get a good view of Red Wing and its surroundings, and he was thrilled at the scene. After breakfast he was ready to start a closer investigation of the town and its inhabitants. His hope was that he might find some Swedes and arrange for a service in the evening. He soon found a number of them, including old friends and acquaintances from Illinois. Among the first ones he met was Hokan Olson, a man who was seriously concerned about getting a Swedish Lutheran congregation established in Red Wing. Mainly through his efforts arrangements were made for a service to be held in what Norelius termed "a shanty church" owned by the Presbyterians. About 100 persons were in attendance at this, the first Lutheran service ever held in Red Wing. There was the God-fearing Hokan Olson, with his wife and six youngsters; there was Nils Nilsson, the first Swede in Red Wing, who worked for Dr. Sweeney and was known as "the doctor's Nils"; there was the deaf Johan Nilsson, first Swede to build a home in Red Wing; there was Carl Anderson, the carpenter, with his wife; there was John Nilsson, the tailor, with his wife; and others.¹

This was on a Saturday evening. It was agreed that another service be held on Sunday afternoon at the same place. The attendance at the second service was larger than at the first one, and hopefully they discussed the possibility of organizing a congregation. Norelius promised to meet with them on Monday evening for this purpose.

Then came a man on horseback, looking for the visiting pastor. His message was "Come and help us." It was August Johnson from a Swedish settlement twelve miles west of Red Wing. As yet the settlement had no name, but was sometimes called "Mattson's settlement," for it was here that Hans Mattson and his companions had settled in 1853, and others in 1854 and 1855.²

Norelius was ready to go, and rode the horse while Johnson walked. It was too late for services that evening, but the message went around the community that a Swedish Lutheran pastor had come and that a worship service was to be held on Monday forenoon at Carl Carlsson's. This pioneer home stood about half a mile northeast of the present Vasa Lutheran Church.

Eighty-seven persons crowded into Carlsson's house to attend the service on Monday, September 3. Though it was but a log cabin in the wilderness, it was a temple on this day, for here was the Word of God, preached in their own language, and here they sang the songs they knew. Then they organized a congregation, the first Lutheran group in Goodhue county. They named it "The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Vasa." The name Vasa, suggested by Norelius, was the name of the royal family in Sweden at the time of the Reformation in 1523. "Vasa" was later adopted as the name of the township and of a small village that came into being within this township.

Hastening back to Red Wing the next day, Norelius conducted evening service in the Presbyterian church and then led the group in organizing the "Swedish Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Red Wing," with 54 communicants and 30 children as charter members.³

Now that Norelius was in Minnesota to see about a possible location where his Indiana friends might settle, he was eager to revisit Chisago Lake, where he had served the previous summer and where the Rev. P. A. Cederstam was now serving, the first resident Lutheran pastor in Minnesota. Norelius was also desirous of having Hokanson from Indiana see the different kinds of land available in Minnesota. With Stillwater as their destina-

tion they boarded a boat. It was an extremely poor boat, and the captain and his crew were under the influence of liquor. However, they reached Stillwater safely. During the journey they met a passenger of more than usual interest, William R. Marshall, who was campaigning for election as the territorial delegate to Congress. Marshall, a native of Missouri had come to Minnesota in 1849, engaged in business and public life, later serving as governor (1866-70). He was one of the founders of the Republican party in Minnesota, in 1855. Norelius found that he was Swedenborgian in religious preference, which caused much debate between the two, but Norelius nevertheless judged Marshall to be a man of character.⁴

They spent the night in Stillwater, and Norelius found one Swedish family and a few single men who met for a devotional service in the evening. Though Stillwater was one of the oldest and one of the busiest towns in Minnesota, few Swedes settled there until some years later. Norelius and Hokanson rode the mail stage to Marine, from which place Norelius went to visit the congregation a few miles away. After preaching there he walked through the woods alone to Chisago Lake. (Hokanson had continued on the stage to Taylors Falls.) The weather was hot and Norelius almost fainted from thirst before he found a farm home, where he could get a drink.⁵

Norelius found the Chisago Lake community increasing in population. Already there were 500 persons, most of them faithful in church attendance. A schoolhouse had been built, in which services were held, but it would hardly accommodate more than 150 persons. Plans were under way for the erection of a church. Norelius had an ear for music, and when the singing was not true, it bothered him. In a news article published in *Hemlandet* a few weeks later he described the congregational singing at Chisago Lake in the following rather uncomplimentary words:

"I must also say something about the congregational singing, and I believe I could say it with equal truthfulness about our countrymen at many other places in America. At one meeting it was especially remarkable. I sang in my way according to Dillner's psalmodikon; the cantor, right by my side, sang in his way, according to what chorale I do not know; one woman near the door sang louder than anyone else and led some of her neighbor women; a man on the other side of the door sang and made melody with a large number of his sex; and outside the build-

ing I heard song and endless music, of how many different sorts I know not. Well, all this put together sounded strange, as anyone can imagine. There was such music that the like of it has never been heard in any beehive."⁶

It was time to start on the journey back to Indiana. On September 17 Johan Brage with a team of old and tired horses set out to take them to Stillwater, but darkness overtook them. After sleeping on a floor at a farm home over night they came to Stillwater early the next day, and from there to St. Paul by stage. Going to an unpretentious rooming house operated by a Swedish woman, they arranged for a service there in the evening. The Swedish population in the city was dwindling, as most of the former settlers had moved away. However, at this time Norelius met for the first time a tailor by the name of Johan Johansson, who in later years became an active worker not only in the St. Paul congregation but in the community and in the general work of the church.⁷

The following day, September 19th, they returned by boat to Red Wing, and on the twentieth went to Vasa, where they were guests of S. J. Willard, one of the earliest settlers in the community. On this visit to Vasa they also met, for the first time, the founder of the settlement, Hans Mattson.

Divine services with holy communion were held on the twenty-first at the home of Nils Peterson, who had the largest house in the community. It stood half a mile south of the present Vasa church. As a result of exposure to the cold, rainy weather, Norelius got an attack of fever and chills while preaching, and was compelled to lie down for a while. The people waited until he was sufficiently restored to get up and distribute the sacrament. On the following day Norelius and Hokanson inspected the land around Vasa, and soon were agreed that it was good and that there was plenty of room for their friends in Indiana. It seemed that there was so much land that it would not be fully occupied for years to come. Returning to Red Wing by oxcart, they set out on September 25 down the river to Illinois, where Norelius preached a few times in Rockford, attended the convention of the Synod of Northern Illinois at Waverly (now Leland), and then returned home with the purpose in mind of getting as many as possible of the parishioners in Indiana to move to Goodhue County, Minnesota. Shortly after Norelius' return to Indiana he received a call to come and serve as pastor of the congregations he had

organized in Red Wing and Vasa. He decided to accept the call, and to move to Minnesota in the spring of 1856.³

NOTES

¹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 629ff.; 656ff.

²Norelius, *Historia*, I, 624ff.

³Norelius, *Historia*, I, 631f.; Norelius, "Hågkomster från 1855" in *Korsbaneret* 1889, 131f.; *Minutes of First Lutheran Church, Red Wing*, MS in archives of First Lutheran Church, Red Wing; *Skaffaren*, Sept. 22, 1880. In his published writings Norelius states that the congregation in Red Wing was organized on the evening of September 3. The minutes of the congregation, written in the handwriting of Norelius, gives the date as September 4, and this is also corroborated by the article in *Skaffaren*, which is a report of an address given by Norelius at the 25th anniversary of the Red Wing congregation.

⁴Norelius, "Hågkomster från 1855" in *Korsbaneret* 1889, 132f.; Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 226.

⁵Norelius, "Hågkomster från 1855" in *Korsbaneret* 1889, 113ff.

⁶*Hemlandet*, December 1, 1855.

⁷Norelius, "Hågkomster från 1855" in *Korsbaneret* 1889, 138f.

⁸Norelius, "Hågkomster från 1855" in *Korsbaneret* 1889, 139ff.

Chapter 9

MINNESOTA MISSIONARY

THE ORGANIZATION of Minnesota Territory in 1849 was the signal for a tremendous influx of people. The six thousand white people soon witnessed the coming of tens of thousands. By the time Minnesota was admitted to statehood in 1858 there were 150,000. Logging and lumbering in the eastern section of the territory attracted men from Maine. Lumber camps and sawmill towns sprang up along the rivers. Villages and farms increased in number as Yankees and immigrants flocked in. With the opening of the great Sioux lands west of the Mississippi in 1851 a great impetus was given to farming. Government land was generally sold at \$1.25 per acre, at this time. Military bounty warrants enabled veterans to get free land. After 1852 they were allowed to assign their warrants. Some took claims, made improvements on the land, and then sold it.

For a few years speculation went wild. Town lots often changed hands every few days, prices increased, easy profits were made. New town sites were platted in the wilderness and usually the speculators published glowing descriptions of their towns, which had no existence except on paper.

In the midst of this time of speculation Eric Norelius and his wife and a few families from his parish in Indiana arrived in Goodhue County. Norelius, though he was but a young man of twenty-two, had insight enough to see the dangers of speculation. In an article in a church paper he said, "Alas! that so many are absorbed in speculation, that fearful enemy of the church of God in the West."¹

Norelius had a call to serve as pastor of the congregations he had organized in Red Wing and Vasa. Each group agreed to pay \$200 in annual salary, and Vasa offered an additional \$100 if the pastor would teach the district school four months each year. During the winter and early spring the men at Vasa had cut logs and built a house about sixteen feet square, intended as a church, district school, town hall, and residence for the pastor. It was still unfinished when Norelius and his wife arrived in May.²

On Trinity Sunday, May 18, 1856, Norelius entered his charge

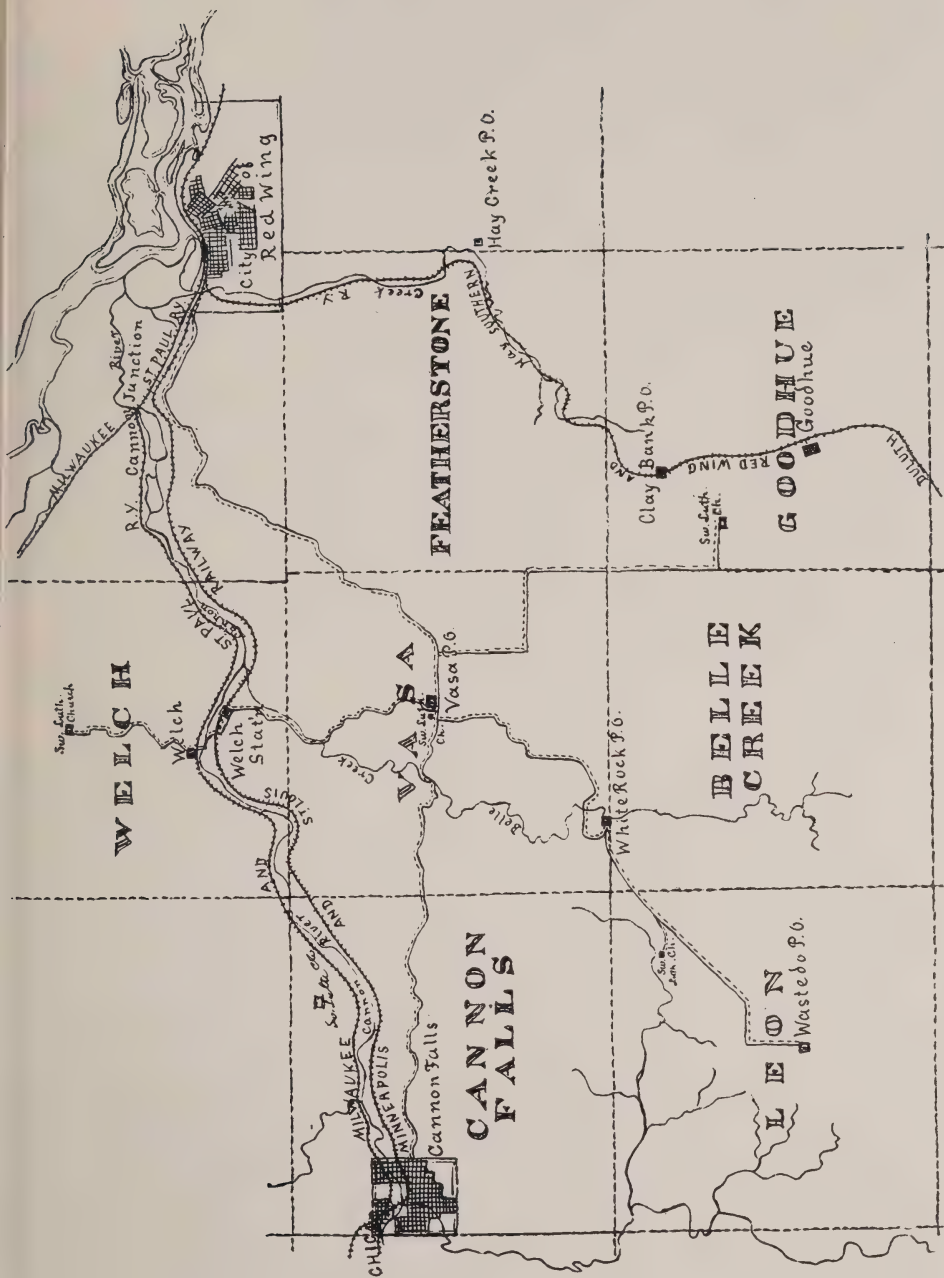
as pastor of First Lutheran Church, Red Wing, and the following Sunday in Vasa. His text at Vasa was the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The service was held at the home of Per Nilson, commonly known among his neighbors as "the rich man." Norelius was not aware of this at the time, but Nilson had the good sense to overlook any tactless expressions the young pastor may have uttered. Since Norelius and his wife had no place to live they were given free lodging at the Nilson home. They had one room, which also served as the meeting place for the congregation until the floor was laid in the schoolhouse.³

It was the desire and intention of Norelius and his wife to own a piece of land where they could have their own home. The spot they chose was a few miles from the present village of Vasa, near White Rock, in the southwestern corner of the township of Vasa (E $\frac{1}{2}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$, 32-112-16). This parcel of land, consisting of 120 acres, had been taken by a Joseph Duke under the military bounty land law. A small shack had been built on it, about eight feet square.⁴

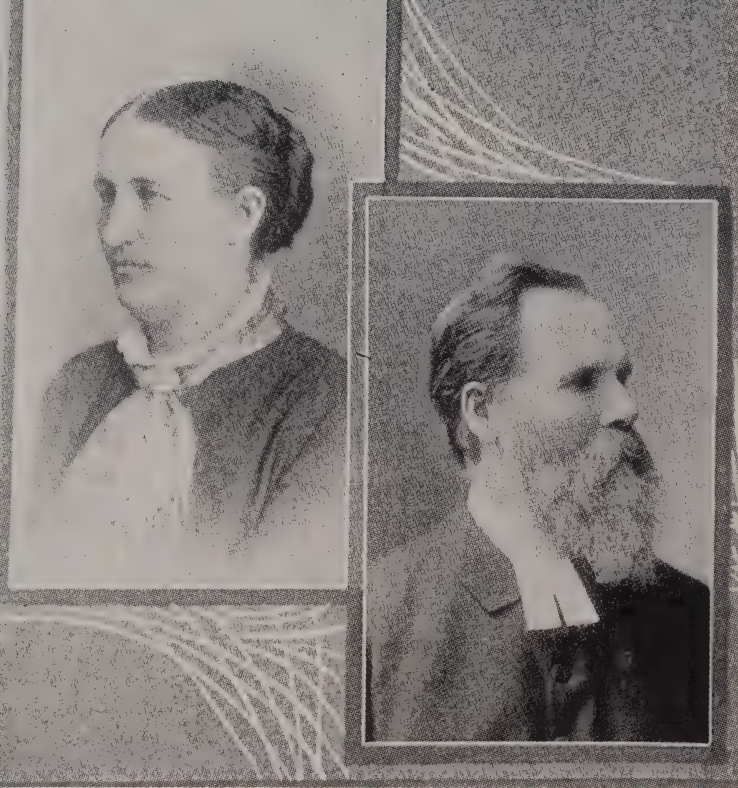
The date when Eric and his Charlotte moved into their own home is not known. His deed to the land was dated August 24, 1857, and recorded on September 7. In his writings Norelius indicates that he bought the place and moved to it in the summer of 1856. It is possible that they lived on the land a year before obtaining legal title.

They were literally on the ground floor when they moved in, except for a bundle of hay, which also happened to be the home of a little snake, as they learned the next morning. The cabin had a sod roof, which leaked badly. A new addition was built of rough boards hauled from Red Wing. Gradually the home became livable. The house stood on a hill that sloped down to Belle Creek. Near by was an excellent spring.⁵

The land around Vasa was of a varied nature, some heavily timbered with oak, elm, and other hardwood trees, some open "prairies" that were more readily brought under cultivation. Vasa township contains mostly rolling land, with some hills too steep for cultivation. South and west of Vasa the land becomes more level and more open. Near the farm that Norelius bought there is an interesting formation, known as "White Rock." This "Rock" is of white sandstone. It occupies an area of some three or four acres and rises to a height of about 100 feet above the surrounding land. It is said to have eroded a great deal since the first



An early map of Vasa, Red Wing, and adjacent communities.



Pastor and Mrs. Norelius, 1876.



The Norelius family home at Vasa, where they lived from 1879 to 1916

white men saw it. Legend has it that the white rock was a sacred place when the Sioux Indians roamed these regions.

No extensive farming was done by Norelius. If he had had any intentions of adding to his salary by profits from the farm, he soon found that his time was too much occupied to allow any opportunity for profitable farming. In addition to his two regular duties in his two congregations he soon found other settlements that needed his services as pastor. He sought to give his help wherever such a need existed, and in the course of his ministry he organized a number of new congregations.

On Sunday, July 6, 1856, as he was about to begin the service at Per Nilson's, an oxcart hove in sight, approaching from the south. In it there were two Swedish families, strangers to the Vasa people, coming to attend Sunday worship, and each family had a child to be baptized. Living eight or ten miles from Vasa they had heard rumors of the arrival of a Swedish pastor, and set out early in the morning to find Vasa. These families were the Edstrom and Wenberg families, who had come the previous fall and were the first Swedish settlers in Leon township, Goodhue county. They asked Norelius to visit their settlement, which he did a couple of weeks later. This was the beginning of the establishment of a new congregation, the Spring Garden Lutheran Church, which, however, was not formally organized until in July, 1858, when Norelius had found a pastor to serve them, the Rev. Peter Beckman.⁶

Even before his first visit to the Spring Garden settlement Norelius had made a journey to Stockholm, Wisconsin. A Swedish colony had been established near this place in 1854, the first family being the Erik Peterson's. In June, 1856, Mrs. Peterson died and her husband sent a messenger to Vasa to bring the Swedish pastor to conduct the funeral service. This visit also became the occasion for a Sunday service on June 20, and a congregation was organized the same day.

Other near-by places demanded the attention of Norelius. Cannon Falls was visited more or less regularly, and a rural settlement known as Cannon River, a few miles from the village of Cannon Falls. These settlers included several families from his former parish in Indiana. A congregation of some twenty-five or thirty members was organized on May 11, 1857. Pledges were secured and a foundation was laid for a church. Norelius walked seventeen miles to Hastings, ordered lumber and had it hauled to

the church site. Suddenly most of the Swedes at Cannon Falls, unmindful of Norelius' warnings against speculation, went to look for new land in Waseca County. The few who remained were discouraged and no church was built. The lumber pile, however, gradually dwindled down as lumber-hungry squatters in the neighborhood sometimes helped themselves. Norelius was forced to borrow money himself at four per cent per month to pay the bill. One conscientious man brought him a sack of flour to pay for the lumber that he had taken.⁷

In Red Wing plans had been begun for the erection of a church soon after Norelius arrived in May, 1856. The church was to be built of boards set upright. It was to be 30 feet long, 26 feet wide, with three windows on each side. The windows were to have fifteen panes each, three panes wide and five high, 12 by 15 inches in size. Only the outside walls were built the first year, and the winter of 1856-57 was bitterly cold. A big stove, fired until it was red hot, hardly sufficed to keep the congregation from freezing. The following year the interior of the church was finished, and it was equipped with pews, pulpit, and chancel rail. This unpretentious building, nicknamed "the Swedish barn," was the first church built by Swedish Lutherans in Minnesota. The congregation soon was too large for this small building but it served its purpose for a number of years. After a new church was built the old one was transformed into a parsonage.⁸

With all his parish work and missionary endeavors in Goodhue County, Norelius nevertheless found time for journeys farther away from home. In the fall of 1856 he and Cederstam went to the synod in Dixon, Illinois, where after being duly examined they were ordained to the holy ministry in the Synod of Northern Illinois. The ordination took place on September 12.

The following spring Norelius made his first journey to Carver County. His account reveals the mode of travel in pioneer times, and also the spiritual conditions as seen through the eyes of the pietistic and zealous young home missionary.

He left Red Wing on the morning of May 20, 1857, without breakfast, and came to St. Paul at 12:30. Here he finally found a few Swedes, and had a service in the evening at the home of a tailor by the name of Johanson. Only a few were present. Norelius wrote in his diary, "The spiritual condition among Swedes

and Norwegians is miserable. A Lutheran pastor should have been here long ago. A great deal has been lost already."

May 21 he recorded that he went about in the city, saw the capitol, accomplished nothing. "Unpleasant in St. Paul. The condition of the Swedes very pathetic. Had a meeting in the evening in a schoolhouse on Jackson Street. Only a few present. Preached on the Ascension."

On the 22nd he again sought out the Lutherans in St. Paul. "Got \$10 from H. M. Kentz for the German church in Red Wing. Met one very respectable German Lutheran by the name of Nie-hause. Had a meeting again in the evening in the schoolhouse on Jackson Street. A few more were present." So he wrote in his diary.

He had better success on the 23rd, when he secured pledges of \$335 for the Swedish Church in Red Wing. The following day was Sunday and he had announced services at 10 o'clock in the schoolhouse, but a German congregation had made similar plans, and the Swedes moved to a Swedish boardinghouse for their worship service. In the afternoon they were allowed to use the schoolhouse for a communion service. The attendance was a little better. He received an offering of \$8.63.

During these days in St. Paul Norelius had formed a favorable opinion of the tailor Johan Johanson and his wife, who, he remarked, were pleasant people and also gave evidence of genuine Christian life. (Norelius records an incident told by Johanson of a man in St. Paul who had hitched up his horses one evening and as he set out his wife asked him where he was going. "To hell," he replied. He had gone but a short distance when the horses turned a corner too fast, the wagon tipped and the man struck the cornerstone of a building and died half an hour later.)

On Monday morning, the 25th, Norelius boarded the river boat "Medora," which was scheduled to leave at 10 A.M., but did not leave until 4 P.M. It rained all day. They passed Mendota and Fort Snelling, and started the journey up the Minnesota River. "The river valley is wide, with excellent soil on clay subsoil, but often marshy on both sides of the river. The bluffs are partly bare, partly covered with woods which now are in their spring beauty. It seems more green here than farther down the Mississippi."

Three miles below Shakopee the boat stopped about 10 P.M., as it was too dark to proceed. There they stayed until four o'clock

the next morning. The boat was crowded. Every cabin was filled, the floor in the salon was full of people. People lay on the tables and under the tables. Some lay on their backs on the floor, with their feet on chairs. "I was among those who had no place to sleep. I placed three chairs in a row, put a sack of oats under my head and tried to sleep—impossible!"

Early in the morning of the 26th they came to Shakopee, which was a fair sized town though only two or three years old. There was one church. "A Swede named Brunius came on board. He was a merchant in Carver. He had just had some Democratic campaign literature printed, as he was a nominee for the state convention. Claimed to be independent but was a strong Democrat."

They passed Chaska, about five or six miles from Shakopee. About two miles from Chaska they came to Carver. Norelius went into the lodge with Brunius and his wife, a German woman who had lived in Sweden four years and could speak Swedish and also English and French. They had a nice home and treated their guest well, but he soon learned that they were free-thinkers. Norelius felt desperately sad and discouraged to see his countrymen living as these did.

"Carver is a new place, nicely situated, has about forty houses, a steam sawmill, no church, a small schoolhouse. If Carver grows, as it undoubtedly will, Swedes will settle there, and a church will be needed." Such were Norelius' first observations. Lots were promised for church and parsonage, and some help was offered to build a church. "If only a pastor were available! Lord, send a good worker to this place," pleaded Norelius in his diary on the day he first visited Carver.

On the 27th he set out to visit the Swedish "Oscar settlement" which was a few miles west and northwest of Carver. Before he left Carver he chanced to meet a Swede named Hedengran, who had a remarkable story to relate concerning his spiritual experiences. Hedengran had thrown his faith overboard and lived in sin, but had become seriously ill and endured agonies of fear and temptation. In his desperation he had read his Bible again and had found guidance and peace through repentance and faith. (Hedengran was ordained to the ministry a few years later.)

Norelius continued on his way to the settlement known as "Oscar." (This was later changed to East Union.) He came to the church which stood on a level, green plot of ground on the south

side of a grove of aspen. It was built of logs, thirty by thirty-six feet, and fourteen feet high. They had begun to shingle the roof. "It will be a good, substantial house when it is ready. Woods all the way from Carver. Woods all around in the settlement, with small openings and marshy prairies. Saw some good cornfields near the church. The soil is good, clay subsoil, houses are well built and fields are well tilled. I lodged at the home of Johan Hult, a God-fearing man."

Wherever Norelius went in the settlement they told him about an imposter by the name of Brown who stayed in the community and made himself out to be a minister. "People say he drinks like a hog, traffics in lies and deceit, goes about in rags, but preaches, nevertheless, and had gotten hold of a few whom he was instructing for confirmation. He had announced that all who wished to be instructed should come on a certain day to the Rosenlund parsonage. He had persuaded the Swedes to build a house for him, and had given it the name Rosenlund. He had promised to get a man to confirm the young people if he could not do it himself. Those who have gone to his class are some who are eighteen or nineteen years old. He arranges games of forfeits, and pays the forfeits by kissing the girls. He considers himself the pastor here, though he has certainly not been called. Another man by the name of Sandblad had been here last year, acting the part of a pastor, and managed to get some money and a gold watch, and then went his way. Our people here are the victims of these despicable creatures, partly because the spiritual needs are great, and partly because many are so simple-minded as to believe what such men tell them."⁹

The return trip from Carver County was not recorded, or if it was the record has not been found. However, it may be noted that Norelius succeeded in getting a pastor for that area. Peter Carlson, a lay preacher and colporteur for the American Tract Society, came to Minnesota in the fall of 1857 and stayed a few weeks in Carver County. Through correspondence with the brethren in Illinois Norelius succeeded in getting Carlson a license and a call. The call was accepted and after a few months of pastoral instruction given by Erland Carlsson in Chicago, Peter Carlson entered upon his duties in Carver County. Two congregations were organized, East Union in July, and West Union in August, 1858. A congregation was organized in Carver several years later.

A mission journey that was a drenching experience but also

a happy reunion with friends took place in the summer of 1858, when Norelius visited some of his former Indiana parishioners who had settled on the frontier in Waseca County, Minnesota. After walking from Red Wing to a pioneer Norwegian settlement in the southwestern part of Goodhue County—a distance of more than thirty miles—Norelius rode the mail stage to Owatonna. The spring and summer had been unusually rainy, and as a result streams were flooded, bridges washed out, roads were almost impassable. As the stage reached the woods along the Straight River evening came on. It was pitch dark, and in order to proceed they borrowed a tallow lantern from a farmer, but such a horde of mosquitoes entered the lantern that the light went out. Presently the stage straddled a stump and was hung up until driver and passengers got out in knee deep mud to lift it off. At Clinton Falls they swam across the river, and again at Owatonna, as the bridges were out.

Owatonna was a welcome sight to the travellers, though they could see but little of it in the darkness at two o'clock in the night. Here they stayed until morning. As the stage proceeded on to Wilton, near the present village of Otisco, Norelius disembarked at the Le Sueur River crossing and, without any trail to follow, set out to find his way to the new Swedish settlement begun the previous year by a dozen families who had come from West Point and Attica, Indiana and had lived in Goodhue county for a short time before moving to the frontier. It was a walk of several miles through woods and water-soaked lowlands. He found his friends living in primitive style in sod huts or in log cabins with sod roofs. Because of the long rainy spell the saturated roofs dripped muddy water on the earthen floors, and Norelius decided to sleep on a bundle of hay in an open wagon box, preferring to lie where the rain was clean.

The first service was held on Saturday, August 7, when Pastor Norelius preached on Lamentations 3:22-26. On Sunday morning, the 8th, which was the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, his topic was "Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, still a loving plea for repentance." In the afternoon the settlers assembled for an outdoor service, at which time they organized the Vista Lutheran Church, so named from Vista in Småland, Sweden, the place from which most of these settlers had come.¹⁰

Norelius' first pastorate in Vasa and Red Wing lasted from May, 1856 to October, 1858. His reasons for leaving have been

variously interpreted, and probably will never be satisfactorily explained. To say that the brethren in Illinois removed him from Minnesota because he was causing trouble is certainly not a fair statement of the facts and the circumstances.¹¹ Poverty, the extremely difficult problem of how to get money for his needs, seems to have been the main reason why he left Minnesota when he did. Money had disappeared from sight when the bubble of speculation and inflation burst in August, 1857. Farm products could not be sold. People lost their land and their homes. Many settlers moved to other places—if they could raise enough money to go. His parishioners could not pay even the meager salary that they had promised. Red Wing paid him \$250.00 in 1856, \$185.00 in 1857, and \$75.00 in 1858. Vasa had promised \$200 per year, but in 1858 paid only half of it, and voted to bring farm products in November for the pastor's benefit. Before he moved he received one barrel of beans and a few bushels of corn. These he could not take along when he left, and the settlers made good use of them for their own benefit.¹²

Norelius was deeply in debt even before the panic of 1857 hit Minnesota. In a letter to Hasselquist in the summer of 1856 he said, "You know I have to earn my daily bread. My salary seems to be very little. I don't think that \$200 is subscribed yet, and I will get only \$50 more from the Home Mission Society this year. . . . I have bought a horse, and have other debts besides. I estimate that my debts amount to about \$400 at present. It looks dark, but let me not think of it; the Lord helps."¹³

For some reason the parish declined aid from the Lutheran Home Mission Society in 1857.¹⁴ This could hardly have been due to any sudden improvement in the pastor's financial standing. Not many weeks elapsed until he mortgaged his farm to obtain a loan of \$280.¹⁵

Not only in the matter of financial support, but also in spiritual attitudes, the parish had greatly disappointed their pastor. He had not been there more than two months before he felt vain regrets that he had left Indiana. Nevertheless he said, "Perhaps it is not right to do that either, for I believe the Lord led me here and therefore I ought to be satisfied. But it is sad here. Out here in the country I hardly know of anyone who even thinks of his spiritual welfare, and although the ungodliness has not broken out in such a noisy way as among your people, I have learned that there is a great deal of ungodliness here, yes, in the most satanic

forms. There are several here who are out and out atheists by conviction and principle. Before one's face these appear to be concerned about the upbuilding of the congregation, but behind my back they make light of all that is holy. Here in the settlement they are terribly slow, cold, and uninterested, and seldom come to services, so I often have to preach to an almost empty church. In Red Wing there are some irregularities, but the people are nevertheless faithful in church attendance, and there are a few true Christians."¹⁶

Without attempting to give a definite answer to the question of why Norelius left Minnesota in the fall of 1858, it may be sufficient to keep in mind his financial difficulties and his spiritual despondency when he failed to get the response he had hoped for in Vasa. However, before recording the removal from Minnesota to Illinois in 1858 there are several matters of importance to be considered, events and movements in which Norelius participated, and problems of church polity and practice he had to face.

NOTES

¹*The Olive Branch*, March, 1857.

²Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 204f. Those immigrants had not yet grasped the idea that in America the district school and the township were functions distinct from the church.

³Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 206.

⁴Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 208; *Records* in Book 1 of Register of Deeds, Red Wing, Minnesota. Norelius states that he bought claim rights to a tract of 160 acres for \$130.00. The records in the office of the Register of Deeds of Goodhue County show the description of the land as being 120 acres. The original claim holder, Joseph Dake, never obtained title to the land. In the Abstract of Title, in possession of the present owners of the land, James and Ruth Henderson, the first entry is United States to Erick Norelius.

⁵Norelius to Hasselquist, July 28, 1856 (MS). The site of Norelius' first home in America has been marked by means of a suitable stone marker donated by the Brotherhood of the Spring Garden Lutheran Church.

⁶Norelius, *Historia*, I, 638f., 676f.

⁷Norelius, *Historia*, I, 666f., 680f.

⁸Norelius, *Historia*, I, 659f.

⁹Norelius, *Ministerial Book*, a small manuscript diary in the archives of Gustavus Adolphus College.

¹⁰Norelius, *Historia*, I, 752ff.

¹¹Anders, J. O., *The Origin and History of Swedish Religious Organizations in Minnesota*, 26.

¹²Norelius, *Historia*, I, 649f., 662.

¹³Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, July 28, 1856 (MS).

¹⁴*The Olive Branch*, August, 1857.

¹⁵*Abstract of Title* to property owned by Norelius. In possession of the present owners of the land, James and Ruth Henderson. In the summer of 1858 an additional loan of \$194.12 was secured.

¹⁶Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, July 28, 1856 (MS).

Chapter 10

FACING FRONTIER REALITIES

BROADLY speaking, Eric Norelius was the product of three lines of religious influence, two of them Swedish and one American.

He was a member of the State Church of Sweden until he emigrated at the age of seventeen. He had been baptized and confirmed in the Church, and he had desired to enter the ministry in that Church. He never renounced or denounced what that Church had meant to him.

He was also influenced by the pietistic revival movement, beginning when he was nine or ten years old. Though this movement was not officially of the Church, and was often frowned on by Church authorities, the pietists as a rule remained as loyal members of the Church, but held separate meetings by themselves in the homes for Bible reading, study of Luther and Lutheran writers, singing, and prayer. They laid great stress on these things as testimonies of genuine faith. In practice they were strict, abstaining from drinking and dancing, and all that may be called worldly pleasure.

The third line of religious influence in the life of Norelius was the American concept of a free church.

It was hardly to be expected that these converging lines should come to a clearcut pattern on the day that Norelius became an ordained pastor. In an article written for a church paper some years later Norelius analyzed his own thinking on the problem he faced as a young pastor on the American frontier. It was the question, What is the Church? How is it constituted? Since that article reveals just what he faced in regard to this problem when he was pastor in Vasa and Red Wing, and how he gradually came to his conclusion, this article is quoted at some length:

"We have heard that many Christians in Sweden do not approve of the way in which we form congregations. They had expected that we would more strictly distinguish between believers and the worldly minded when congregations are to be formed. We confess that as a candidate we had the same thoughts. We sat in our room and formulated propositions as to how we would pro-

ceed when we came out on the field and were to form congregations. These propositions seemed to us very good, and we could not see why they could not be put into effect. But how very differently the matter presented itself when we had to deal with realities and not theories! We came to a region where a considerable number of our countrymen were living. There was seen to be a certain need of churchly order; but we found few concerning whom we could have a well grounded hope that they had gone through a change from darkness to God's wonderful light. We preached, and the people seemed to hear God's Word gladly and to be eager to have a pastor and an organized congregation. Among a hundred we could note only a few, perhaps five, who seemed to have the right attitude. What was now to be done? If we were to follow our chamber theories, we either should form a congregation of these few, or if this were not possible, form no congregation at all. It is obvious that five or six poor new settler families could not support a pastor, even if his requirements were only necessary clothes and daily bread. The others who, according to our chamber theory, ought not belong to a true Christian congregation, would, of course, not help to support it if they could not belong. We had it clear in our mind that he who preaches the gospel shall have his support from the gospel, and could not accept the idea that we should support ourselves by holding political office or in any other way. Should we now hold on to our theory and leave these people without the preaching of God's Word and without pastoral care, or should we give up our theory, organize a congregation, preach the gospel and train up a people that would in time be worthy of being called Christians? That which made us decide to do the latter was not so much the question of our own support, but rather the following reflections: All these people are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ; they are more or less instructed in the truths of the Word of God. They feel a certain need of religion, and want to hear God's Word. They cannot be regarded as pagans. Some of them seem to be true believers; but what guarantee have I that they are really sincere? Many of those who do not appear to be true believers are nevertheless living in a way that is not unworthy of the gospel. Where is the boundary line between the true believers and those who are not? Can I draw the line? Has God authorized me to determine this boundary? Has He not rather said, Preach the gospel to all creatures. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who

disbelieves will be condemned. We must confess that our theories began to tumble down, and it became clear to us that where people want to hear God's Word there it is our duty to proclaim it, yes to proclaim the whole counsel of God unto salvation; that the visible church is a training institution for the kingdom of glory, and that where people showed a willingness to be thus trained, there it was our duty to organize a congregation."¹

Norelius perhaps seldom thought consciously of techniques and methods of church work. His task was to build up the Church, and in the American free church situation the only way to do it was to find the people and minister to them to the best of his ability. Basically, the methods and techniques that he developed were the same as those that prevail in the more technique-conscious home mission organizations of today. Aside from the formal act of organizing a congregation, adopting a constitution, electing officers, incorporating according to law, there were such practical matters as securing books for worship and instruction, and for records; getting a site for a church, and a plot of ground for a cemetery. Instruction of the children in the Sunday school, week day school, and catechetical instruction was one of the first needs.

But Norelius did not stop with these obvious requirements. As soon as possible he made a complete canvass of every home in the settlement and talked to every family about their church membership, their obligations to the church and to their Lord. This first visitation in Vasa, in the fall of 1856, showed that 101 members desired to be enrolled in the church.²

The relation of the congregation and its pastor to the church at large was frequently in the mind of Norelius. During his two and one half years at Vasa several events occurred that had an important bearing on the development of the church body to which he belonged. These were his attempts at publishing a paper, and his participation in the formation of the Minnesota Conference, and the visits of several of the older pastors in Illinois and in the east.

NOTES

¹*Luthersk Kykro-Tidning*, I, 2, Jan. 15, 1872.

²Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 210.

Chapter 11

MINNESOTA CONFERENCE ORGANIZED

BEFORE Eric Norelius was ordained he had entertained serious doubts as to which Lutheran Synod he should join. Even after his ordination in the Synod of Northern Illinois he had no great love for that church body. There were various reasons for this, which will become clear as the story progresses. He became involved in controversies with his own friends in that Synod, men such as Esbjörn, Hasselquist, and Carlsson. Some of these matters seem trivial after a century, but they were of importance at the time.

Norelius, though but a youth in his early twenties, was not inclined to let his older brethren decide everything for him. At times he was at odds with them. But it is also interesting to note that several of them sought him out in his pioneer home at Vasa to confer with him, and sometimes to try to persuade him.

First of these visitors from "below" was Esbjörn who called on him in July, 1856, to solicit money in his congregations for the Scandinavian professorship which was to be established at the Lutheran institution in Springfield known as "Illinois State University."

Later that summer Dr. W. A. Passavant of Pittsburgh called on him to discuss with him the prospects for the Lutheran Church in Minnesota.

In 1857 T. N. Hasselquist spent several days with him while on a missionary tour of Minnesota, and tried to dissuade him from starting a Swedish newspaper.

Norelius has been called a "separatist" and a "challenger"¹ who later was converted into "a zealous advocate of synodical unity."² This story has its beginnings soon after Norelius moved to Minnesota in 1856, when he began to think about a new synod in Minnesota, and a school in that state. When Dr. Passavant visited Norelius in his pioneer home near Vasa in the summer of 1856 they discussed the matter of a location for such an institution. A spot near Norelius' farm was considered. Lake City was also thought of as a possible location. These plans did not materialize. The question of a new synod in Minnesota was broached

early in 1858 and became a hot issue for a few months. The first definite suggestion for establishment of a Minnesota Synod came from Passavant, possibly at the urging of Heyer, but Esbjörn was aware, early in 1857, that Norelius "would prefer that they have a synod of their own in Minnesota."³ Heyer wrote to all the Lutheran pastors in Minnesota, numbering ten or twelve. Plans were made to hold the convention in Norelius' church in Red Wing, July 4-6, 1858. The stage seemed set for a break in the ranks of the Swedish pastors. Would the Swedes in Minnesota join the new synod?

The brethren in Illinois were stirred to action to prevent this break. Though they adopted a very conciliatory tone in their letters, their solid opposition was evident. Esbjörn urged Norelius to insist on a confessional basis for the new synod, if the Swedes were to join. Hasselquist urged that the new synod be affiliated with the General Synod.⁴ Erland Carlsson made a direct and impassioned plea to Norelius not to break away from the Swedes in Illinois.⁵ Passavant, sensing the seriousness of the opposition in Illinois, wrote to Norelius appealing to him to respect the wishes of the Illinois brethren, and even suggested that it would be better not to organize a synod yet, but merely a "Lutheran Church Union" as a preliminary step.⁶

Just a few days before the meeting was to be held Norelius wrote to Hasselquist and somewhat innocently asked, Why all the excitement? He declared he had never had any intention of joining a new synod without the approval of the brethren in Illinois.⁷

Eight pastors and six lay delegates came to the meeting in Red Wing, which began with divine services in the Swedish Lutheran Church on the evening of July 4. Business sessions were held the two following days, and the result was the organization of the Minnesota Synod. Only four of the pastors joined, C. F. Heyer, William Thomson, William Wier, and Albrecht Brandt.

The Swedish pastors present at the meeting were P. A. Cederstam of the St. Peter-Scandian Grove parish; Peter Carlson of the East and West Union parish in Carver County; Peter Beckman of Spring Garden, in Goodhue County; and Norelius. They had considered the question, in the light of the opinions expressed by their Illinois brethren, and decided not to join the new synod, but to ask instead for approval of a plan to organize themselves into a Minnesota Conference of the Synod of Northern Illinois.⁸

Norelius himself has stated that the reasons for his decision to stay out of the Minnesota Synod was the nationalistic bond with the Swedish brethren in Illinois. Whether this is a full and complete explanation of his motives is not easy to determine now, but no doubt this consideration weighed heavily with him. He probably had serious misgivings as to how the Swedes, Germans, and Norwegians in Minnesota would get along together in a Minnesota Synod, even though it was established on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Norelius when he says that his own interest and that of the other Minnesota brethren in the organizing of a Minnesota Synod was the great distance to Illinois, and the expense and inconvenience of travelling to synod meetings, and also their feeling that the Minnesota home mission field was not given sufficient attention by the Swedes in Illinois. Furthermore Norelius had never been satisfied with the doctrinal position of the Synod of Northern Illinois, and had been of the firm conviction that the only solution was for the Scandinavians to withdraw from that Synod and organize a synod of their own.⁹

The Synod of Northern Illinois was organized on a "broad and liberal basis," purposely to accommodate various kinds of Lutherans. When Esbjörn joined he insisted on being recorded as holding to the Augsburg Confession. The same declaration was in turn made by Hasselquist, Carlsson, Andreen, Norelius, Cederstam, and Peter Carlson. Esbjörn seemed convinced in his own mind that the confessional Lutherans were gradually influencing the "new Lutherans" and winning the battle for sound conservative Lutheranism in the Synod. Norelius never felt that this was the case. Hasselquist seemed to have no qualms or fear about the matter and was aggressive in his espousal of the cause of the General Synod, seemingly unconcerned about its laxity in doctrine and its unionistic tendencies.¹⁰

Norelius was not convinced that Esbjörn and Hasselquist were right in their thinking that the Scandinavians were winning the battle for confessional Lutheranism in the Synod of Northern Illinois. But he was unwilling to take the step of leaving that Synod if it meant breaking away from them. He broached the matter of organizing a Scandinavian synod, but Hasselquist had as yet no interest in such a project. Norelius chided him for being harsh and illogical. "Now when the brethren down there on the one hand object to a Scandinavian Synod because they fear they

might become too much Scandinavian, and on the other hand have the same feelings toward the idea of the Minnesota brethren joining an American Synod for fear they will be too much American, or rather that the Scandinavian interests may suffer thereby, it seems like being boxed on both ears at the same time."¹¹

That Norelius was regarded as too independent in his thinking and in his actions is evident from a letter written by Erland Carlsson, in which he tries to smooth over the feeling of Norelius at being termed "schismatical." "I have never thought of you as being schismatical . . . except in regard to the question of organizing a Synod in Minnesota. . . . The matter of undertaking to publish your own paper, organizing a new Synod, and speaking about erecting a college at St. Paul, all this I could only consider as opposition and the beginning of a love divided."¹²

The Minnesota Synod had only a meager growth and a short existence. In 1872 it was amalgamated with the Wisconsin Synod. What might have happened if the Swedish pastors had joined can only be a subject for conjecture. Following their decision to stay out, the four Swedish pastors asked the Synod of Northern Illinois for permission to organize a Minnesota Conference. No opposition to this plan was offered by the Swedish pastors in Illinois, and permission was formally granted by the Synod.¹³

The original plan had been to meet in Carlson's church at East Union for the organization of the new conference. Later it was decided to meet in Chisago Lake, because the Chisago Lake Church had been vacant since Cederstam left in May, and the people would appreciate this special visit by the pastors. The date set was October 5, but difficulties of travel caused a postponement to the 6th.

Norelius, together with J. P. C. Borén, who had come from Sweden in the summer of 1858 to assist in his parish, left Red Wing early in the morning of October 4, travelling by river boat to Prescott, Wisconsin, from there to Hudson by stage, then on foot to Stillwater, where they spent the night. The following day they walked to a farm home north of Marine, near the village of Copas, where they found lodging. On the 6th they rode by oxcart to the south end of Chisago Lake and to the church by boat.¹⁴

The official delegation at the Conference meeting numbered four pastors and four laymen. Besides the three pastors from Goodhue county, Norelius, Boren, and Beckman, there was Peter Carlson of East Union. Cederstam of Scandian Grove had visited Chisago Lake a few days prior to the meeting but found it neces-

sary to return home. The lay delegates were: Håkan Swedberg of Chisago Lake, a former pupil of Norelius' when he taught school in Chicago; Daniel Nilson, pioneer at Marine; Frans C. Björklund, Rusheby; and one Norwegian, Ola Paulson, East Union.

Divine services occupied a large part of the time during the three and a half days of the convention. The frame church, built in 1856, was filled to capacity again and again.

In simplicity yet with all due order the Lutheran Minnesota Conference was organized on Friday, October 8. The newest arrival, Boren, was chosen chairman, Norelius, secretary. Mr. Ola Paulson was elected treasurer, and the first money entrusted to him was an offering at the Sunday service amounting to \$5.09.

A constitution was adopted, consisting of three brief articles, probably written by Norelius. It called for three meetings of the Conference each year, and special stress was laid on the home mission responsibility of the Conference.

Norelius recorded, as an addition to the minutes of the convention, that the brethren felt happy over the fact that they had come to the point of organizing their own Conference. There was a festive spirit, and the future seemed bright. They did not worry about difficulties. Nothing seemed impossible to them.¹⁵

Norelius left Minnesota three weeks later, but it was not long until he came back, and for more than half a century was a leading figure in the Conference which he had helped to organize.

NOTES

¹O. F. Ander, *T. N. Hasselquist*, Pp. 46, 47, 133.

²*Ibid.*, P. 147.

³W. A. Passavant to Norelius, Feb. 18, 1858 (MS); L. P. Esbjörn to Erland Carlsson, Feb. 24, 1857 (MS).

⁴L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Mar. 8, 1858 (MS); T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, May 24 and June 28, 1858 (MS).

⁵Erland Carlsson to Norelius, June 28, 1858 (MS).

⁶W. A. Passavant to Norelius, May 19 and June 26, 1858 (MS).

⁷Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, July 3, 1858 (MS).

⁸*Minutes of Minnesota Synod organization meeting*, in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 132f.

⁹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 791ff.

¹⁰T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, May 24, 1858 (MS); Norelius, *Historia*, I, 798ff.

¹¹Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, July 2, 1858 (MS).

¹²Erland Carlsson to Norelius, July 29, 1858 (MS).

¹³*Minutes of Synod of Northern Illinois*, September, 1858.

¹⁴Norelius, *Tal hållit vid Minn. Konf. 25 års fest*, 21ff.; Johnson, *A Church Is Planted*, 2ff.

¹⁵*Minutes of the Minnesota Conference*, 1858 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 133ff.

Chapter 12

STARTING A PAPER

HASSELQUIST had started the publication of a Swedish newspaper at Galesburg, Illinois, in 1856. Known as *Hemlandet, det Gamla och det Nya* (The Homeland, the Old and the New), its purpose was to bring news of America and of Sweden to the scattered immigrants all over the United States. It was Hasselquist's private venture, and though not a church paper it often served as a medium for church news, announcements and notices, and discussion of religious topics.

When Norelius moved to Minnesota, he soon began to dream of a similar venture. He was convinced that the increasing number of Swedes in Minnesota would guarantee the success of a paper slanted to their desires and interests.

How to raise money for such a project was of course the big problem facing Norelius. But he also faced the opposition of Hasselquist, who could not look upon this as anything but ruinous competition. In the summer of 1857 Hasselquist journeyed to Minnesota. It was, partly, a home missionary journey, but on arriving at Vasa he found it convenient to arrange for a few days' vacation. The waters of Lake Pepin, then as now, held attractions for summer tourists, and Norelius took his guest out for a fishing and swimming expedition, combined with a missionary visit to Stockholm, Wisconsin.

Years later, when Norelius wrote a biography of Hasselquist, he stated, in so many words, that Hasselquist tried to stop him from proceeding with his plans for a Swedish paper in Minnesota. Prior to his visit Hasselquist had written to Norelius warning him that the project would mean financial loss for both of them.

However, Norelius states that the real reason for Hasselquist's opposition was that he was a "centralization man." He advocated *one* synod, *one* institution of higher learning, *one* paper, *one* central board, and as much as possible, the concentration of the Swedish Lutheran congregations geographically.

Norelius admits (in his biography of Hasselquist) that it was youthful ignorance that led him to start a paper in Minnesota with a program the same as that of *Hemlandet*. But, he adds, it

happened partly because of the old struggle between the center and the periphery. In Illinois, at that time, said Norelius, they were opposed to emigration to Minnesota; they were opposed to a conference in Minnesota; they advised against a high school in Minnesota, and of course, they were against a paper in Minnesota. "This view was shared by Hasselquist, though his enlightened mind often was against it."¹

This opposition did not deter Norelius. The first issue of *Minnesota Posten* came out under date of November 7, 1857. How had he raised money in the panic-stricken economic situation of that fall to enable him to start the venture? A fairly sure guess is that the loan of \$280 obtained by means of a mortgage on his farm in August had something to do with it.

Minnesota Posten was published at Red Wing. The page size was 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ by 15 inches, six columns to the page. It was, generally speaking, a better printing job than *Hemlandet* was at that time. Both used the old German type, which was commonly used for most Swedish printing until toward the end of the 19th century.

He announced in his first issue that *Posten* would aim to serve the Swedes, particularly in Minnesota, both in public and churchly matters. Since the Scandinavians were already exerting influence politically, a paper was needed to inform them about political matters. The *Posten* would be independent in politics, but since the Republican party at the time favored the principles the editor approved, he would espouse the cause of that party. In churchly matters the editor made no secret of his Lutheranism. Scientific and literary matters would also receive attention, likewise agriculture and the arts. There would also be news from Sweden, though mainly the paper would be concerned with the American scene.²

The first issue contains the first installment of a serial story; a brief apology for not getting the paper out on time; news from Sweden; report on election of governor, with detailed reports from Chisago and Goodhue counties; church news from various states; the constitution of Minnesota in Swedish; a trip to Illinois, with dissertations on the troubles of river navigation, ("It is a shame that Congress spends money on the spread of slavery instead of improving navigation on the Mississippi River"); a recipe for tomato wine; a warning against drunkenness; Red Wing market report (flour, \$5.00-\$5.50; wheat, no demand; oats, 50-60 cents; corn, 50-75 cents; ham, 15-16 cents; butter, 25-30 cents eggs, 20-22

cents). The advertisements occupied somewhat less than three columns. The amount of advertising increased only a little in succeeding issues. At the end of the year the paper had 300 subscribers, but only a few had sent any money. Norelius very gently pleads for payment. In a previous issue he had announced that he would accept wheat, corn, butter, beans, wood, etc. for subscriptions.

Several articles appeared early in 1858 warning against the five million dollar state loan for railroads in Minnesota. Neither Norelius nor others could persuade the state that this bond issue would be ruinous. The loan was approved by the voters, a large part of the money was spent and not a mile of railroad was built. The results of this gravy train affair were felt in Minnesota for many years.

In editorials in his paper Norelius set forth his arguments for the establishment of a Minnesota Synod. The first announcement was made in the issue of April 28, 1858, when plans called for a meeting in Prairieville, six miles south of Cannon City. In the issue of May 11 Norelius poses this question: "Shall the Swedish Lutheran Church in America constitute an organization by itself or shall it be divided among separate district synods?" Then he states definitely that he favors a Swedish Lutheran synod, but he sees little prospect for the fulfillment of this hope. Since the Swedes in Illinois already have joined a synod there, why should not the Swedes in Minnesota join a synod in their state? In a later issue (May 25) he argues for the new synod because delay may mean that some other group will organize a synod, either on the new-Lutheran basis or the "formalistic" basis. He recognizes that there is opposition because if the Lutherans organize a synod they will also want a school, but he disclaims all intention of establishing an institution of learning in Minnesota now ("this must be left to the future"). He is sure that they will support the school in Springfield better if they organize a Minnesota Synod.

As already related, the Minnesota Synod was organized, but without the Swedes. They instead organized the Minnesota Conference of the Synod of Northern Illinois. Almost immediately after that Norelius moved away. He could not bear the financial burden of publishing the paper and had been forced to yield to the realities of the situation. The last issue was dated October 19, 1858.

At the election in November he was elected auditor of Goodhue county, though he had not filed for the office. He had no desire to serve in this office and did not accept.

Esbjörn had been delighted over the appearance of the *Posten* as a rival to *Hemlandet*. "Truly he (Hasselquist) wants to try to hinder your paper. . . . Everything he lays his hands on he makes his own profit from and then he always complains about the cost and bother. . . . Besides, he is not dependable in regard to the doctrine."³

"As for *Hemlandet*, I share your views entirely, and can also add that you don't need to worry your conscience about invading its territory."⁴

Even as early as April, 1857, Hasselquist, in trying to dissuade Norelius from starting a paper, had offered to let him take over *Hemlandet* with the suggestion that it be published in Chicago.⁵

When Norelius left Vasa it was with the intention of serving as solicitor for funds for the Scandinavian professorship at Springfield. He had a call from the Synod to travel in the eastern states for this purpose. Passavant, however, reported that because of the hard times it was futile to try. Then, an agreement was hurriedly made to move *Hemlandet* to Chicago, Norelius to serve as editor. He began his new duties with the beginning of the year 1859.⁶

NOTES

¹Norelius, *Hasselquist, En Lefnadsteckning*, 62ff.; T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, July 1, 1857 (MS).

²*Minnesota Posten*, I, 1. A complete file of the paper is in the Minnesota Historical Society Library, St. Paul.

³L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, July 10, 1857 (MS).

⁴L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, March 3, 1857 (MS).

⁵T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, April 17, 1857 (MS).

⁶L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, July 15, 1858 (MS); Norelius, *Historia*, I, 655.

Chapter 13

A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

NORELIUS did not feel at home in the *Hemlandet's* office, and his stay in that position was only a few months.

Esbjörn applauded him,¹ but this was probably due in part to his dissatisfaction with the former editor and his personal liking for Norelius.

Hasselquist, with proofreader's eye, and with a penchant for punctuality, sent his criticism: "You must edit and correct better, and do not use so many foreign words"²; "Saturday, and no *Hemlandet*. Is it your fault, or the fault of the post office?"³

Not many issues had been put to bed before the new editor realized that getting out a paper for an organization is not the same as publishing one's own. Something of his feelings along this line had been communicated to Esbjörn, for the latter wrote: "I am very sorry that you are not so free and satisfied in publishing *Hemlandet* as you were with *Minnesota Posten*. Of course I cannot know just what kind of influence some directors may want to exercise over you, but if it seems altogether too restrictive, then no doubt you are justified in referring to the fact that it was expressly said and understood during the deliberations (though not expressed in writing) that the directors '*would not have any censorship over the publication*' but that the editor was free to decide what he wanted or did not want to put in to the paper. If he should *unreasonably* use this liberty, then he could be dismissed."⁴

In September he was ready to quit. He published a farewell message giving these reasons for leaving the paper: "For the conscientious editor it is much more difficult faithfully to represent the many wills than one's own way of thinking. It is this difficulty which the editor of *Hemlandet*, as a (Swedish Lutheran Publication) Society paper, must struggle with; it is this which makes it hard for him to take care of his responsibility."⁵

It is evident that Norelius had sent out feelers in several directions in the hope of finding a new field of labor. Chisago Lake had considered him as a possible candidate, but called C. A. Hedengran instead. A letter from Cederstam at Scandian Grove

shows that Norelius had indicated a desire "to help in the great field in Minnesota." Passavant wrote in reply to a letter from Norelius outlining a plan whereby mission aid could be granted if he were to serve in Minnesota.⁶

Instead of returning to Minnesota, however, he went back to his first parish at Attica, Indiana. This became for him a time of pleasant association with old friends, and seemingly more progress than during his first pastorate there.

Aside from his duties in the parish the most significant event during this stay in Indiana was Esbjörn's visit at Christmas time, and the sequel which came a few months later.

It was Esbjörn's eleventh Christmas in America, the tenth for Norelius. Never during these years had they been able to enjoy a Christmas together in the old Swedish way that both remembered with nostalgic longing. Norelius had invited Esbjörn to come for the dedication of the new church during Christmas week, so there would be a double portion of the festive spirit. Mrs. Esbjörn was to come with him.

Esbjörn's joy in the anticipation of this visit with Norelius was heightened by the thought of another subject which he longed to discuss very fully. This was nothing less than the question of secession from the Synod of Northern Illinois and the organization of a Scandinavian synod.⁷

Statements made after these events had taken place indicate that the Scandinavians had talked of it among themselves immediately after the synod held in Chicago in September, and that they then felt "there was only one way out and that was to leave the Synod. It was our decision to take this step at the meeting scheduled to be held at Knoxville next fall."⁸

These plans were kept strictly secret. Esbjörn wrote to Norelius in November: "In regard to my wish to move the professorship chair to Chicago, it is best not to talk about it until we personally meet. Then the matter can be better discussed. For that purpose it would be well if Carlson could come there at the same time."⁹

Along with Christmas fish and rice porridge and church festivities they discussed various angles of the problems facing them. How should the proposed new synod be organized? Should it be affiliated with the General Synod, or with any other of the older synods? After his return home to Springfield Esbjörn wrote that he had just read about the Ohio Synod being divided into district

synods. Perhaps the Scandinavian synod could become a new district in the Ohio Synod. Esbjörn wanted Norelius to write a confidential inquiry to Dr. W. F. Lehmann, president of the Ohio Synod, asking if this might be considered a possibility. Perhaps the Ohio Synod might even let the interest on the \$1500 Jenny Lind Fund go to the support of the Scandinavian professorship in Chicago.¹⁰

Norelius was hesitant about writing to Dr. Lehmann on this subject, and Esbjörn, though thinking that Norelius was unduly cautious, nevertheless yielded to Norelius' judgment in the matter. He rejoiced over news from various quarters indicating that practically all the Scandinavians were ready for secession: "The majority are more in favor of our proposal than one expected. Carlsson, as usual more cautious, expresses himself in such a way that it does not overthrow our hopes. He says they talked privately about the matter but did not come to any decision now, but postponed it until the Conference meeting. . . . Thus we have corroborative evidence that people are ready for serious action. The most cautious one will no doubt be Hasselquist, but if the proposal concerning Cervin is adopted, then he too will no doubt go along on the matter. . . .

"My idea on the *methods* to undertake the separation since I somewhat pondered on the matter is that we *not* do as the Americans did last fall, ask permission to organize our own Synod, but make our decision and notify the Northern Illinois Synod that we have found it necessary to organize our own independent Synod. From this it follows that we have nothing more to do with the General Synod or the Illinois State University. The reasons besides the General Synod's loose Lutheran character are: (1) Accepting the Melancthon Synod, which means to go back from looseness to a fixed and public approval of false doctrine. As long as we had hopes that the General Synod would better themselves we remained in it; (2) The situation in our own Synod last fall, Altman's congregations' adoption of the Platform, etc.; (3) The College, evidently unsuitable for our Churches' needs, etc."¹¹

The next letter from Esbjörn indicates that Norelius considered the situation very serious and feared that it might cast a shadow on the Scandinavians.

Esbjörn replied: "You are right; the subjects mentioned are serious, but I am convinced more and more that they would come to pass. Neither I nor the pastors of the other Swedish churches

can stand up and be accountable to God and man if we let things be the way they are now. As far as the 'shadow' is concerned, the Americans will have to get along with their share of it as best they can. It is not in their nature to be ashamed very much. As far as our part of the 'shadow' is concerned, it becomes less serious when one considers that we, during these years, have not had any special fellowship with the Americans except in the Synod, and here we have gone our way and they have gone theirs. But now when we try a closer tie it turns out that this cannot be done—and so much the less that they now begin to assert themselves more firmly than ever to force us back. Look at how it went last fall at the Synod with the 'preamble,' and they declared there that at the Synod in Knoxville *we will not be allowed to mention the symbolical books*. Look at the Dixon affair, also the Springer-Harkey correspondence which was printed in the last *Observer*, No. 1376, by the Egyptian. It all shows that the Americans whom Harkey was not able to convince that he has to keep old Lutheranism in check, rage wildly. The worst of it is, the terrible influence on the young people, both spiritually and morally, which is here exerted. It will never do even for this reason to have our ministerial candidates in a mixed institution among American young people of all kind of sects or no faith at all.

"In regard to Americanization, they are being Americanized too much here. Already it is easier for many to express themselves in English than in Swedish or Norwegian. My experience of a year and a half has fully convinced me that the Americanizing they need they could get from an English 'tutor' in a little institution under our control, just as well as they here have a couple of such tutors. This tutor can be paid out of the \$350 or \$400 tuition money paid by Scandinavian students to the American professors. . . . With the help of the Scandinavian pastors in Chicago there should be no difficulty instructing about twenty youths. There are only four here who carry the whole burden of instruction, Harkey, myself, Ross, and Brinkerhoof."¹²

Erland Carlsson, when he sent Norelius announcement of the Conference meeting to be held in April, foresaw "a complete breaking off with the American portion of our Synod."¹³

The break came abruptly and unexpectedly on March 31, when Esbjörn resigned from the professorship and from the Synod. The Conference in April (including all the Scandinavian pastors) heard his report and after discussion of the matters involved voted unani-

mously to approve his action and to secede from the Synod of Northern Illinois. A date was set for a meeting at which the Scandinavians would organize their own Synod.

What happened in Springfield to bring about this sudden break? Why did not Esbjörn wait a few more weeks, as had been planned, until the Conference could discuss the matter and take action in an orderly way?

The story goes back to the very beginning of the Synod of Northern Illinois, and in fact, even farther back. The Lutheran Church in the United States had a history dating back to colonial times. In many areas the development of the Church had been along the lines of the conservative Lutheran Reformation. But in some places there sprang up doctrines and practices that were more and more Calvinistic and Reformed than Lutheran. The proponents of the new doctrines insisted that in America it was unnecessary and foolish to adopt all the European characteristics of the Lutheran Church. It was to be an American Lutheran Church. By this they meant not merely an American church geographically and linguistically but also in doctrine and practice. It was an era of growing nationalism. All European backgrounds were to be changed or eliminated. Foreigners were suspect. American independence, to be complete, must reveal itself also in freedom from Old World religious beliefs. At this time the dominant religious force in American life was the revivalistic methods which had made particularly the Methodist Church the acme of religious life and vitality in the eyes of many. Beyond this, the thinking of many in America had become rationalistic, with a consequent disdain or disregard for faith, especially faith in the value of the sacraments as means of grace.

"American Lutheranism" was intended to fit into this picture. Specific doctrines were to be toned down or ignored. The validity of the sacraments was doubted or openly denied. Revivals and highly emotional evangelistic meetings were among the "new measures" advocated in the circles of the so-called American Lutheranism. In 1855 a Lutheran theologian, Dr. S. S. Schmucker, published a "Definite Synodical Platform" which was nothing more nor less than a proposal for an American substitute for the Augsburg Confession which had been the specific basis of Lutheranism since its adoption in Germany in 1530. The Platform made a tremendous stir in Lutheran circles in America, though but a comparatively few congregations ever adopted it.

In the Synod of Northern Illinois, organized 1851, an attempt was made to bring together Lutherans of different beliefs, both of the "American" type and the conservative, and some who tried to stay in the middle of the road. Esbjörn had insisted that his adherence to the Augsburg Confession be duly recorded. For a few years he seemed to think that the conservative element was winning the battle for mastery of the Synod, especially as the other Swedes joined, Hasselquist in 1852, Carlsson in 1853, and others later.

However, when Esbjörn came to Springfield he felt himself very much alone in his conservative attitude. There was no Scandinavian church in Springfield. Esbjörn felt responsible for the religious care of all the Scandinavian students, not only in the matter of instruction in theology in the classroom, but perhaps even more outside.

The Platformists in the Synod had made an attempt in the fall of 1859 to force a revision of the constitution, not by actual amendment of the constitution but by the adoption of a preamble in which the doctrinal differences in the Synod were designated as "minor points of disagreement," whereas the Scandinavians considered these differences extremely vital. The president of the school in Springfield, Dr. William Reynolds, was trying hard to convince the Platformists that he could keep Esbjörn and the other Scandinavians in check, and by his actions antagonized Esbjörn to the point where he told his Scandinavian students that Reynolds was a dangerous man, unsound in doctrine. When this came to the ears of Reynolds he went to Esbjörn demanding an explanation and calling Esbjörn to appear before the faculty. Esbjörn resigned, so that the president could have no right to summon him. This was on March 31, 1860.

His resignation did not mean that the Scandinavian students necessarily must leave the school. He had some money that had been donated for the support and welfare of the students. This money he distributed to them, and told them what he had done. Every Swedish student, and all but one of the Norwegians left in two or three days. Esbjörn moved to Chicago at the same time.¹⁴

NOTES

¹L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Feb. 7, 1859 (MS).

²T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Jan. 17, 1859 (MS).

³T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, July 16, 1859 (MS).

⁴L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Apr. 2, 1859 (MS).

⁵*Hemlandet*, Sept. 21, 1859.

⁶D. Lindstrom to Norelius, Aug. 26, 1859 (MS); P. A. Cederstam to Norelius, July 20, 1859 (MS); W. A. Passavant to Norelius, Sept. 23, 1859 (MS).

⁷L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Nov. 15, 1859 (MS).

⁸*Hemlandet*, July 11, 1860.

⁹L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Nov. 15, 1859 (MS).

¹⁰L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Jan. 18, 1860 (MS).

¹¹L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Jan. 26, 1860 (MS).

¹²L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Feb. 7, 1860 (MS).

¹³Erland Carlsson to Norelius, Feb. 17, 1860 (MS).

¹⁴The story of Esbjörn has been told in a full length biography by Sam Rönnegård in Swedish, published 1949 in Stockholm, translated into English by G. Everett Arden and published 1952 under the title *Prairie Shepherd*.

Chapter 14

AUGUSTANA SYNOD ORGANIZED

THREE days after Esbjörn resigned he wrote to Norelius, stating the circumstances of his resignation and suggestions for the next steps to be taken:

"I was compelled to resign sooner than I had thought, and the reason was [W. M.] R[eynolds]' threats to 'show me up,' 'make me regret what I had said to the students,' etc., etc., which led me to the conclusion that he intended to accuse me before the Synod, discipline me before the faculty, etc., for what I had said to the students about his doctrine, etc. At the same time I withdrew from the Synod so as to get 'out of reach of R.' I have come to the conclusion that he is a dangerous plotter from whom I want to get away. You will therefore prepare yourself to go to Conference, propose that I, as no longer a member of the Synod, be received as a member for the time being, also seriously oppose R. who is trying to influence the Scandinavians and force his way in at the Conference. . . . See to it that the congregations give the delegates the right to withdraw from the Synod and to promise aid to a little college at Chicago, so the matter can be settled at the Conference."¹

The "Scandinavian Conference" (consisting of the Chicago and Mississippi Conferences, and in this case also the Minnesota Conference) met in Chicago, April 21-27. Harkey, president of the Synod, and Reynolds, president of the school, were present. The first two days the delegates listened to Esbjörn's report and the explanations and discussions given by Harkey and Reynolds. On the third day the Scandinavians unanimously approved Esbjörn's action and voted to withdraw from the Synod. June 5 was the date set for a meeting to organize a new synod.²

The reverberations of Esbjörn's hasty resignation and the subsequent secession of the Scandinavians echoed and re-echoed across the land for many months in the Lutheran Church press. *Hemlandet*, of course, set forth the story from the viewpoint of the Scandinavians. *The Olive Branch*, Reynolds' and Harkey's own paper, denounced Esbjörn in no uncertain terms: "We deny the statement of the Professor in toto, as utterly destitute of even

the semblance of truth. In reality it has no foundation at all except in his own excited, blinded, and suspicious imagination."³

The *Lutheran Standard*, organ of the Ohio Synod, applauded the Scandinavians vigorously: "The well known fact that the Swedes are generally devoted and sincere friends of the Lutheran faith indicates the probable character of the difficulties. The equally well known antecedents of the leading men of that institution leave very little room for doubt in this matter. The attempt to bind together the most heterogenous materials by considerations of accommodation and expediency, seems now to be ending [in] a general 'dissolution of the union,' and all the parties but one, seem to have come to the conviction that it is high time to abandon an association held together by such flimsy bonds."⁴

Passavant deplored the split in the ranks. He wrote Norelius: "I am anxious to keep this controversy within as narrow a limit as possible so as to avoid irritation and strife as far as this can be safely done. I therefore would rather not publish the article you kindly sent me. My views are fully expressed in the last *Missionary*. I might have made them much stronger, but I feel that we must not wound too sorely in public. Fully appreciating the difficulty of your situation, I yet feel most sad and sore that the very brethren to whom I looked for a decided conservative influence have left the Synod and thus wonderfully complicated the whole difficulty. It is not difficult to see how dear Br. Esbjörn should become confused in such a wirlwarr and struggling with poverty, debt, and doubt, should be most anxious to escape. I have only charity and love for that dear father and faithful servant of Christ. But I am truly sorry that he should have left thus suddenly without notification or warning and to the great peril and injury of the Institution. But it cannot be helped now. Let us pray that God will overrule all for good. I still feel the same interest in the College and the same and even greater interest in the Scandinavians. Br. [Paul] Andersen knows well how I was opposed to the union with the Synod of Northern Illinois in the first place, and in the second place, with the College, because I foresaw all that has come to pass. I even offered 2,000 acres of land in Minnesota, if they found that they were in any way hampered in their arrangement (doctrinal) with the professorship. Br. Andersen had my offer in his pocket, and had their demands not been accepted they would have had the land in question as an endowment now."⁵

The editorial referred to by Passavant in his letter to Norelius, was an honest attempt to see both sides of the question. He wrote that "such was the opposition of a minority in the Synod to everything distinctively Lutheran that the situation of our Swedish and Norwegian pastors was often most embarrassing and painful." He spoke of Harkey and Reynolds as the "conservative American" brethren in the Synod, and that they had tried to be patient in order to avoid fratricidal war, but that their stand had placed them "in a wrong position toward the Scandinavian portion of the Synod and to create the painful impression that with them peace was before principle." Added to these troubles was the fact that *The Lutheran Observer* had published articles written by "certain violent Platformists in the Illinois Synods" which were "laden not only with the most offensive language against Drs. Harkey and Reynolds, but full of irritating remarks concerning the foreign element in the Synods. . . . That they [Harkey and Reynolds] were most anxious to avoid everything which might keep up this unhappy strife, is abundantly evident from numerous facts which need not here be detailed. The result, however, of some of these was the painful impression produced upon the mind of Rev. Prof. Esbjörn and other Scandinavian brethren that the Springfield professors had ceased to stand up for the right, and the consequent misconception of numerous private and personal affairs *in the light of this* which we have not the heart nor the disposition to record. The final result was the sudden and utterly unlooked for resignation of Prof. Esbjörn . . ."⁶

Passavant referred to an article sent him by Norelius, which, he said, he did not want to publish. Whether he changed his mind or Norelius changed his article it is impossible to determine, but an "explanation" by Norelius was published in *The Missionary*. It was in reply to a bitter attack in *The Olive Branch*. Three points were touched on: 1. *The Olive Branch* had left the impression that the Scandinavians discussed for two whole days whether to separate from the Synod. Norelius said, "Now the editor knows as well as I do, that these 'two whole days' were devoted to the hearing of Professor Esbjörn's report, in which he enumerated the reasons of his resignation, and to Doctors Reynolds and Harkey's reply to the same—all of which was listened to with patience and calmness. Not a word was said in regard to our separation until the evening of the second of those 'two whole days' and then it was mentioned only as a matter of probability. It is

true, we did separate from the ecclesiastical connection we have hitherto sustained but there was no doubt among ourselves as to our duty in the matter. The minds of all were prepared for this step and when the question came up (on the third day) there was not one dissenting voice; all voted for separation."

The second point touched on was the statement in *The Olive Branch*, "The excitement will pass away; second and sober thoughts will produce a reaction, and better counsels will prevail." To which Norelius replied:

"Though couched in kind language, this says nothing more or less than that the step taken was the result of excitement and evil counsels. . . . I can assure the editor, that if he entertains any such thoughts, it is simply a mistake. Our ministers and congregations have gradually become prepared for the separation and neither the sudden resignation of Prof. Esbjörn, nor anything else of a monetary and personal nature, has excited to it."

In the third place *The Olive Branch* had declared that "the Scandinavian Lutheran Church *cannot* exist and prosper permanently in this country separated from the great body of American Lutherans." To this Norelius replied that it was not the intention of the Scandinavians to shut themselves up within their own nationality. "We will be more and more Americanized with every day. But when doing so, must we necessarily lose the faith of our fathers? Or does the editor mean to say that there is no true Lutheranism in this country but in the General Synod? I know he does not; but then why cannot we as Lutherans 'exist and prosper permanently in this country,' if we continue in our devotion to the pure faith?"

Norelius' efforts to write a sane and sensible article did not please Esbjörn. He thought Norelius was "too lenient, yes, almost 'soft soaping' . . . I have been shamefully discredited by the filth of both the O. B. [*Olive Branch*] and the *Luth. Observer*. . . . My sudden resignation has brought it about that I must carry the dog's head and be the target, when nevertheless that *one* is the one who has brought about the separation."⁸

Esbjörn had somewhere picked up the mid-century style of American journalistic invective, and used it to the best of his ability, and the editor of the *Lutheran Standard*—less compunctious than Passavant—published his blistering article.⁹

Norelius, in his article, almost let on that the Scandinavians had been discussing the question of secession privately for some

time, and that they intended to take it up at the Conference. But the big secret about the Christmas week in Attica never seemed to leak out, at least not in print.

No one would question the right of the Scandinavians to withdraw from the Synod of Northern Illinois and from the school at Springfield. Few, if any, would have questioned the wisdom of it. But there will always be a question about the propriety of doing it in the way they did. The constitution specified that a professor must give six months' notice before resigning. Esbjörn resorted to various arguments to justify his breach of this provision, but they hardly seem impressive. After Esbjörn's action, however, there was nothing the other men could do than to follow along. They could not very well disown him.

The meeting of the Scandinavians for the purpose of organizing a synod was held, according to decision, in the Norwegian Lutheran Church at Jefferson Prairie, near Clinton, Wisconsin.¹⁰

The sessions opened on June 5 and continued until the 11th. Norelius, now 26 years old, was the youngest of the 26 pastors who, together with 15 lay delegates, organized the "Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Synod in North America." The name "Augustana" was suggested by Norelius.¹¹

Adoption of this name emphasized adherence to the basic doctrinal statement of the Lutheran Reformers, as adopted at Augsburg, Germany, in 1530. Augsburg, a city in Bavaria, was named after Caesar Augustus, who established a Roman colony there about 14 B.C. The Latin name of the colony was Augusta Vindelicorum. The Latin designation of the Augsburg Confession is "Confessio Augustana."¹²

To what extent Norelius contributed to the discussions at the first synod is not known, except on one point. He was the father of the first home mission plan of the Augustana Synod. He introduced the following resolutions which were unanimously adopted:

"Whereas the home mission work is of such great importance and significance, and since spoken and written exhortations are needed in order to arouse our people to a whole-hearted and active support of this cause, therefore be it resolved,

"1. That a committee of three be selected to have charge of this matter and to report its action to the Synod;

"2. That the same committee be authorized to call a traveling missionary especially for Minnesota as soon as circumstances permit;

"3. That the President of the Synod appoint one of the brethren to preach a home mission sermon at the next synodical meeting."¹³

The newly elected president of the Synod, Rev. T. N. Hasselquist, was elected to the home mission committee, together with two Norwegians, Rev. O. J. Hatlestad and Mr. Ole Paulson. But instead of leaving it to the committee to decide on whom to call as travelling missionary, a motion was made and adopted that student Per Nymanson of Sweden be called. He did not accept, which was a fortunate thing for the Synod, as his later life was a sort of seesawing between the Lutheran faith and other beliefs, and finally a spurning of all faith.¹⁴

The brethren in Minnesota had been lonesome for Norelius since the day he left in 1858. Now they desired, of course, that he should be chosen as the travelling missionary. It is possible that he himself shared the desire, though he publicly denied it.¹⁵

He received the call in July through Hasselquist as the chairman of the home mission committee. He left his friendly congregation and its new church in Attica, Indiana, to go and seek the scattered countrymen in Minnesota, though he had no illusions as to the conditions he would face, and though he knew that the promised salary of \$400 for a year was only the promise of a new home mission committee with not a penny in its treasury and no assurance as to when there would be.¹⁶

NOTES

¹L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Apr. 3, 1860 (MS).

²*Minutes of Chicago & Mississippi Conference*, Apr. 21-27, 1860.

³*The Olive Branch*, May, 1860.

⁴*The Lutheran Standard*, Apr. 27, 1860.

⁵W. A. Passavant to Norelius, May, 1860.

⁶*The Missionary*, May 17, 1860.

⁷Norelius, in *The Missionary*, May 24, 1860.

⁸L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, May 26, 1860.

⁹*The Lutheran Standard*, May 25, 1860.

¹⁰The congregation is still in existence, but does not now belong to the Augustana Church.

¹¹*My Church*, VI, 26; C. J. Södergren, *The Augustana Synod 1860-1910*, 35; H. E. Jacobs, in *Minnen från Jubelfesten*, 256.

¹²*The Lutheran Companion*, Feb. 10, 1954, 14.

¹³*Augustana Synodens Protokoll*, 1860, p. 11.

¹⁴*Early Life*, 285.

¹⁵P. A. Cederstam to Norelius, Feb. 15, 1859 (MS); P. Beckman to Norelius, Mar. 5, 1860; Minnesota-Konferensens Protokoll, June 27-30, 1860.

¹⁶T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, July 20 and July 30, 1860 (MS).

Chapter 15

FRONTIER CIRCUIT RIDER

IN THE ten years from 1850 to 1860 more than 160,000 people moved into Minnesota. During the territorial period the Indians had ceded their lands in the state, except for small reservations. The largest land cession in the history of the nation was the one consummated by the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851, which included the greater portion of the good farm land in the state.

From 1854 to 1857 there were more than 700 new towns platted in Minnesota. Though some of these were nothing but speculators' dreams there were hundreds that became thriving cities or villages as people were pouring into the new area, looking for an opportunity to start a general store, or to engage in building trades, or newspaper enterprises, or any of a hundred occupations. Most of the people were native Americans from the eastern or southern states. But Minnesota had early recognized the importance of attracting immigrants to the great open areas waiting to be plowed and planted. In 1855 Minnesota sent an official representative to New York to serve as "Commissoner of Emigration." Not only this official welcome to the Territory, but also the editors of Minnesota papers, and the land companies, and perhaps the most important of all, letters from early settlers to friends back home, served to increase the incoming stream of immigrants from foreign countries.

The census of 1850 showed only twelve Scandinavians and 147 Germans in Minnesota. Ten years later there were 12,000 Scandinavians and 18,400 Germans.¹

By far the greatest number of Swedish immigrants came from the rural areas.² It was natural that the greater portion of them, who had slight possibility of ever owning a piece of land in Sweden, would eagerly seize the opportunity of buying 160 acres of cheap government land in America.

The Swedish Lutheran pastors in Minnesota, who numbered only four in the early part of 1859, were well aware of the influx of their countrymen into the state. Just as Norelius had done when living at Vasa, they travelled to different parts of the state

to find the new Swedish settlements and to minister to their countrymen as best they could. Thus, at the June meeting of the Minnesota Conference, Peter Carlson at Carver reported that he had made monthly visits to Gotaholm (Watertown), Camden (a township in McLeod county), and Scandia (near Waconia) and had also visited Chisago Lake, Marine, and other places in the St. Croix valley. An attempt had been made to visit Forest City and the region west of there but roads were impassable because of heavy rains. Peter Beckman in Spring Garden had visited the congregations in the St. Croix valley and also the Vista settlement in Waseca county. At the August meeting Carlson was able to report that he had succeeded in visiting the regions around Forest City (Meeker and Kandiyohi counties), where he had found seventy Swedish families and some Norwegians, and had organized three congregations. During the same time Borén at Vasa had visited Stockholm, Wisconsin, and McGregor, Iowa.³

Such was the field to which Eric Norelius was called as home missionary. The Minnesota Conference gained one pastor in the fall of 1859 when C. A. Hedengran was licensed to preach and accepted a call to Chisago Lake. Even with this addition to the ranks, however, the brethren felt their inadequacy to give proper care to the ever growing home mission field. At every Conference meeting a large part of the time was devoted to consideration of the problem of giving at least a bit of attention to each one of the outlying settlements and the vacant congregations.

Immediately after the meeting at which the Augustana Synod was organized in June, 1860, Eric Norelius visited Minnesota and attended a Conference meeting in East Union. He delivered the opening sermon. Though he was then a resident of Indiana he was elected President of the Minnesota Conference. (At that time the president had no duties except to serve as chairman of the Conference meeting at which he was elected.) The Conference, while still a part of the Synod of Northern Illinois, had elected a home mission committee whose duty it was to try to secure a travelling missionary for Minnesota. The committee now reported that attempts to find a missionary had been in vain. Now that the Minnesota Conference had become a part of the Augustana Synod, and this new Synod had voted to call a man from Sweden to serve as travelling missionary, the question arose as to whether Minnesota should still have a home mission committee of its own. Knowing that the man who had been called would not come for a

year, if at all, the Conference instructed the committee to continue its efforts and try to secure a man before fall.⁴

Though the minutes of the meeting do not mention the matter, it is quite evident that the man they had in mind was Norelius, and there was much pleading with Norelius, both publicly and privately, but he said no. There are indications that Norelius had hoped to get back to Vasa, as may be seen from a letter written by a member of that church only a few weeks earlier:

"Today we had a church business meeting in regard to the Synodical convention. Rev. Borén asked us if we wanted to have him as our pastor next year, or not. But as you are our pastor and promised us last summer to come to us, so I ask you, Pastor Norelius, in a few words, to please answer . . . and come to us. . . ."⁵

Norelius, however, was convinced that the need was great, and evidently gave his brethren some assurance that he would accept a call, for on July 4, Cederstam, Carlson, and Beckman addressed a letter to Hasselquist asking that Norelius be called to Minnesota for one year, and on July 20 Hasselquist wrote to Norelius saying that the Minnesota pastors had requested that he be called as the Synod's travelling missionary.

At the next Conference, held in Vasa October 19-21, the committee happily reported that Norelius had accepted the call, was now in Minnesota, and present at the meeting for discussion of details regarding his work. At this convention Norelius was elected secretary.

The Conference decided that it would be advantageous to have the missionary live in St. Paul, and the congregation there was urged to call him as their pastor, and to provide him with a house, in return for the services he would render when he was not out on missionary tours. Furthermore the Conference voted to provide, in addition to the salary offered by the Synod, feed for the missionary's horse. (There were, as yet, no railroads anywhere in Minnesota.) In order to enable him to buy a horse and wagon the Conference voted to give him the entire contents of the Conference treasury (about \$35.00) as a loan without interest for one year. All the congregations in the Conference were urged to do their very best in support of home missions.⁶

As soon as Norelius had got his family settled in St. Paul he prepared to set out on his journey to find the scattered Swedes and bring to them the ministration of the means of grace. The first thing was to buy a horse and wagon. The money lent to

him by the Conference for this purpose was entrusted to a man who was a member of the St. Paul congregation. He soon returned with a big horse, lame in both front legs, a patched up harness, and a rickety light lumber wagon. The Augustana Synod's first travelling missionary was about to set forth on his task of proclaiming the gospel.

His destination was the country west of the Big Woods, in Meeker and Kandiyohi counties, which then was very near the frontier of settlement in Minnesota. On the way he planned to visit Peter Carlson at East Union, in Carver county, where he would enjoy spiritual fellowship and would also receive specific directions as to how to find the various settlements where Carlson had organized congregations the previous year. It happened that Carlson came to St. Paul about this time and on his return home rode with Norelius. The man who had served as buyer of the horse and wagon went along to Minneapolis, driving here and there in an odd and suspicious manner. From Minneapolis Norelius and Carlson drove on across the rolling hills to Carver and before nightfall had reached the one-room log parsonage at East Union where the Carlson family lived, slept, ate, baked, washed, read, and prayed. A little corner was curtained off for the pastor's study. It was Saturday evening, December 1, when they arrived. Norelius stayed over Sunday, preached in East and West Union, and discussed with Carlson the plans for his impending tour of the new settlements.⁷

But "the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley." Before Norelius had set out on Monday morning, two men arrived, riding in a wagon. They asked him if he had come from St. Paul the previous Saturday, and when he said yes, one of them produced a piece of paper, which was a replevin demanding the return of the horse and wagon. They were stolen property, and without further ceremony were taken away and returned to St. Paul. Instead of letting this hinder him from his projected journey Norelius immediately began to look for other means of transportation. Snow was now falling and he needed a sled instead of a wagon. Peter Carlson said, "You may borrow my sleigh." A member of Carlson's church, Ole Paulson, said, "I have a horse you may borrow." Thus the problem was solved. The sleigh was a home-made outfit. The horse was blind, a fact which the owner did not try to conceal. Norelius even conceded later not only that the horse was a good one in spite of its blind-

ness but that he even owed his life to the horse sense of this faithful beast. Norelius bought the horse and travelled far and wide with it in Minnesota.⁸

Carlson had advised Norelius not to attempt the journey to the Forest City region before Christmas since the time was too short. Consequently, he set out on a shorter trip, leaving East Union on December 5 for a visit to settlements in Carver and McLeod counties. His first stop was at a small settlement west of Clearwater Lake (now Waconia Lake), then to Scandia, on the northeast side of the lake. The Swedes at this place were Baptists, but they invited Norelius to preach in their church. He had an audience of some twenty people. From there he drove seven miles northwest to a settlement named Gotaholm, near the present village of Watertown, where some twenty or thirty families were then living. Among the pioneer farmers in this settlement was one by the name of Olof Anderson, who had been a member of the riksdag (parliament) in Sweden, and was very well-to-do. He was a venerable and godly man, a pillar of the community and the congregation. From Friday, December 7 until Wednesday, the 12th Norelius stayed in the community, holding services every evening, and on Sunday morning. The people gladly came to listen and Norelius felt encouraged.⁹

A dozen miles southwest of Watertown, on the line between Carver and McLeod counties, a little village called Camden had been established where Buffalo Creek joins the Crow River. A sawmill had been established and a few houses had been built, but it was a deserted village when Norelius found it. However, in the woods of Camden township there were a few Scandinavian settlers, and it was to these the travelling missionary directed his way. Though he was lost in the woods a few hours he found the settlement in the evening and was welcomed in the home of a family who had recently come from northern Norway to try their hand at farming in Minnesota. A service was held at this home the following day, but Norelius felt that the people were rather indifferent. After some consultations they invited him to come again the following Sunday. Promising to do this, he left for a trip to a settlement five or six miles southeast of Glencoe. On the way he found the road almost blocked by an Indian camp of fifteen teepees. He succeeded in getting through, and found the settlement, which consisted of Norwegian farmers. Peter Carlson had previously visited them, and now Norelius led them in or-

ganizing a congregation, which was given the name of "The Evangelical Lutheran Pontoppidan Congregation." Eight families joined.¹⁰

On his return to Camden, Norelius not only had to face the prospect of driving through the Sioux encampment, but the red men coming home from their day's hunting saw him and piled on his sleigh for a free ride. He has given a graphic account of this incident:

"At last I had such a load of Indians that it was all the horse could pull. They talked and yelled and made fun of my blind horse, while I tried to appear as bold and self-confident as possible. It was dark when we came to their camp and there was a terrible noise. I made my way between the teepees the best I could, but here and there I knocked down their poles and other stuff in this tight place. The women scolded, the children shouted for 'kashtpop,' the dogs barked, and the men whooped. It was terrifying, but no one tried to do me any harm. I was glad to be free from this crowd. . . .¹¹

After preaching in Camden on Sunday, December 16, Norelius returned to Carver by way of Young America. He found that he needed a warmer overcoat and Carlson let him borrow a sheepskin lined fur coat. Thus equipped he returned home to St. Paul, and found his family alive and well. On the Sunday before Christmas he preached in Afton where a few Swedish families had settled, but where several different religious views were manifested, making it difficult for any to build up a church.

It seemed a bit dreary and cheerless for Norelius as Christmas approached. Little of the promised salary had been paid. Hasselquist had visited many of the congregations in Minnesota during the fall and had secured a few small offerings: \$5.65 in Red Wing; \$1.79 in Vasa; \$3.50 in Scandian Grove; \$3.50 in Gota-holm; \$4.41 in East Union; \$2.25 in West Union; \$5.25 in St. Paul; \$3.27 in Marine; \$7.34 in Chisago Lake; \$3.26 in Taylors Falls; \$6.23 in Bostwick Valley, Wisconsin; and \$7.75 in Rockford, Illinois. Some gifts had also been sent by individuals. Altogether Norelius had received \$101.05 in cash, and gifts *in natura* worth five or six dollars.¹²

Depressed and sad because he could not buy anything extra for his family for Christmas, Norelius went along the streets of the city, praying in his heart for some way out of his difficulty. There came a feeling that he should go once more to the post

office. Obeying this impulse he found a letter addressed to him. It was from his friend Dr. Passavant. The letter contained a draft for \$100.00, a free will offering from St. John's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia. Needless to say, there was not only Christmas joy for the Norelius family, but a renewed kindling of gratitude to God and zeal for the work.¹³

The congregation in St. Paul had no church as yet. When Norelius took charge there were only thirteen members. Few Swedish families chose to settle in the city as permanent residents. Most of the Swedes in St. Paul were temporary laborers and "hired girls" who came from the rural areas to find work and earn a few dollars. Many of these forgot the farewell pleas and admonitions of pastor and parents.

In a rented room located in the area where the railroad yards are now, Norelius held a joyful Julotta service on Christmas Day, 1860. Lights and decorations helped to make it a festive occasion for all. John Johnson, a nephew of Pastor Hasselquist, led the singing, playing the hymns on his psalmodikon.¹⁴

On the few days Norelius had time to be in St. Paul he worked on the project of getting a church built. In his report to the congregation in February, 1861, he was able to say that a lot had been bought from Henry Schurmeier for \$525.00. Fifty dollars had been paid, and it was expected that \$50.00 more would soon be paid. The rest was to be paid in annual installments of \$100.00 each, with interest at the rate of ten per cent. Citizens of St. Paul had subscribed \$59.50 for the proposed church, of which \$33.00 had been paid. Members of the church had promised \$266.00.¹⁵

After a visit to the churches in Goodhue county between Christmas and New Year's, Norelius set out early in January on his long-projected trip through the Big Woods to the region now comprising Meeker and Kandiyohi counties. He passed through Minneapolis (considering it useless to stop since few Swedes lived there at that time), through Wayzata, and found lodging in a log cabin in the neighborhood of where Maple Plain is now. The next day he came to Gotaholm, conducted service there in the evening, and stayed over night. The snow lay deeply drifted as he drove his blind horse 37 miles to Hutchinson, a village of four or five houses, a hotel, and a sawmill. The weather was cold, and the unheated upstairs of the hotel offered little protection at night, but with four pairs of stockings, moccasin boots,

cap, and fur coat on, he survived the ordeal. From Hutchinson he turned toward the northwest, by way of Greenleaf, and along toward evening came to a Swedish settlement at Lake Ripley. He found these Swedes rather seriously divided religiously. Only a few were Lutherans.

"Marine Lund," near the present Grove City, was his next stopping place. Here he found twenty Swedish families, stayed with them over Sunday and held services at the home of a Methodist. However, a Methodist minister also came to hold services the same day. It was finally agreed that he should preach at one of the Lutheran homes in the evening. It transpired that the two preachers slept in the same bed at the Lutheran home that night.

Before Norelius continued on his journey the following day his host provided him with a compass, and he soon found this to be a most useful article, and in fact, a necessity in the snowy wilderness. Going northwest past Diamond Lake he drove up to shore at Columbia (later changed to Spicer). He was told to go northwest from this place to find the home of a Swede on the shore of Nest Lake. After being lost for a time in the forest he found the place and was warmly welcomed. Other Swedish pioneers had settled in the region. These were Lutherans and had been served for a time by student Andrew Jackson, who at the time of Norelius' visit was in Chicago preparing for ordination to the ministry. For eight days Norelius stayed in the region, preaching at the homes of settlers at Nest Lake, Eagle Lake, Lake Andrew, and elsewhere.¹⁶

Leaving Nest Lake on his return journey Norelius hoped to reach Marine Lund by night, though he had to travel through unbroken snow for miles. He was still on the open prairie when darkness fell and it was too dark to see the compass. The blind horse led him to a grove where he found a human habitation. They had no room for him at this place but showed him a light on the other side of a near-by lake. Proceeding as they directed him he found a Swedish family who heartily welcomed him. At this place he stayed several days because of stormy weather. When the storm had abated a little he set out in the direction of Lake Ripley, some ten miles away. The storm increased in fury again, and soon the hapless traveller realized that he was completely lost on the prairie. In his confusion he did not even believe his compass, but rather trusted his blind horse. This confi-

dence was not misplaced, for at last, when night was coming on the horse came up against a fence. Driving along the fence they soon reached a house. When Norelius told the people that he was a Lutheran minister they would not let him stay, but showed the way to another house, a dugout where a Swedish family lived. This was west of Lake Ripley. In this humble home Norelius stayed a whole week, while the furious blizzard raged.

When the skies cleared once more the men went on skis to call the neighbors together for services in the home of one of the settlers. With oxen and sleighs they opened the roads and came to worship, a privilege which they seldom had on the frontier.

Setting out for home he drove on an unopened trail across the prairie to about where Darwin now is, and then he followed where a road had been cleared through the woods to Moer's Prairie, near Cokato.

After a night's lodging at the home of a settler who had no bed to offer, but only a bench, and no food to sell except a couple of potatoes, Norelius had another long day's drive to reach St. Paul. He had been gone three weeks, with no opportunity of sending or receiving any mail. He and his family rejoiced that he was home again after such a hazardous journey.¹⁷

For a short time he worked in St. Paul and Afton. In February the Conference met in St. Paul, and Norelius was able to report that he had travelled 600 miles and preached 67 times since coming to Minnesota, and he had baptized five children and organized one congregation. During December and January he had been at home only five days.¹⁸

Other journeys undertaken by Norelius took him to Goodhue, Dakota, Waseca, Nicollet, Chisago, and Washington counties, besides his attendance at a conference meeting in Decorah, Iowa and a synodical meeting in Galesburg, Illinois. During this time the Civil War had broken out. A number of Swedish and Norwegian men were stationed at Fort Snelling, trained for action and waiting to be sent south. Norelius visited the Fort at least twice and conducted services for the soldiers, many of whom were personal friends of his. From Vasa 62 men enlisted, 47 of them Scandinavians, many of whom had heeded a stirring appeal by Hans Mattson, who became their leader and rose to the rank of colonel.¹⁹

In October, 1861, Norelius had concluded his year of service as travelling missionary. At the Conference meeting held at Marine on October 3 he reported that he had received a total

of \$377.76. Expenses, which the Conference had promised to pay, were \$95.00. Thus the balance of the salary, still unpaid, was \$117.24.²⁰

Thus closed an eventful and extremely difficult year in the life of Norelius. He had shared the hardships and dangers of the pioneer settlers, in a way that completely identified him with the home mission work in Minnesota. No one knew better than he the situation of the immigrants, and the problems they faced. No one better realized their spiritual feelings, their needs and their aspirations. No one was in a better position to become an outstanding leader among them. In fact, he was already the leader, by virtue of his personal qualifications, his education, his experience, his devotion to the cause for which he worked.

NOTES

¹Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 144f.

²Lindberg, *The Background of Swedish Emigration to the U. S.*, quoted from *Emigrationsutredningen*, Bil. V., Table 6.

³*Minn. Konf. Protokoll* in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 141ff.

⁴*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 27-30, 1860 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 148f.

⁵Sven P. Petterson to Norelius, May 19, 1860; Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, July 24, 1860 (MSS).

⁶*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 19-21, 1860, in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 152f.; *Early Life*, 287.

⁷*Early Life*, 288f.

⁸*Ibid.*, 289f.; 311f.

⁹*Ibid.*, 293ff.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 295ff. The Pontoppidan congregation remained in the Augustana Synod until 1870, when all the Norwegian congregations withdrew to form their own Synod.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 297.

¹²*Ibid.*, 298f.; *Hemlandet*, April 17, 1861.

¹³*Early Life*, 299f.

¹⁴*Jubel-Album, 1854-1904, First Lutheran Church, St. Paul*, 16, 44.

¹⁵A church was eventually built on the lot, in 1868. (In the author's book, *A Church Is Planted*, the statement appears that the location of the church was at Bradley and Patridge. This is incorrect. It was at Woodward and John Streets.)

¹⁶*Early Life*, 300ff.; a very complete and detailed account of the settlements in Kandiyohi county, the beginning of church organizations, and the massacre of many of these settlers in 1862 is given by Victor E. Lawson in his *History of Kandiyohi County*.

¹⁷*Early Life*, 309ff.

¹⁸*Hemlandet*, Feb. 27, 1861.

¹⁹*Early Life*, 317f.; *Vasa Illustrata*, 252ff.

²⁰*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 3, 1861, in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 162ff. Norelius received small amounts on payment of this debt for several years, but it seems doubtful that he was ever paid in full.

Chapter 16

RED WING AND VASA

WHILE Norelius was pastor at Vasa and Red Wing, visiting outlying settlements, editing the *Minnesota Posten*, thinking of a new Minnesota Synod, the need of an assistant became urgent. Hearing of a man in Sweden who in youth had been a carpenter, but after a religious conversion had determined to devote himself to the service of the church, Norelius invited him to Vasa.

In Sweden his name was Johan Peter Carlson. When he came to America he took the surname Borén. Norelius met him at a conference meeting in Princeton, Illinois in September, arrival of Norelius, and until eight or ten families left the congregation. At the Synod Borén was accepted for service and granted a license to preach, with the understanding that he was to serve in Minnesota under the guidance of Norelius.

Shortly after their return to Minnesota they made the journey to Chisago Lake for the organization meeting of the Minnesota Conference. Borén was elected as the first president.

Since the Chisago Lake congregation was vacant at the time it was agreed that Borén should stay a few weeks. In November, when Norelius moved to Chicago to become editor of *Hemlandet*, Borén became his successor in Vasa and Red Wing. In Red Wing he received a regular call, but the Vasa people still considered Norelius their pastor, and Borén only as temporary supply. In June, 1860, Vasa gave him a call for one year, which was not renewed when the term expired. In Red Wing Borén had brought upon himself the ill will of many by suggesting that the congregation should sell pew rights in the church to raise needed money, and by insisting on the adoption of this plan. The result was that the congregation voted him out, at a meeting on June 28, 1861.¹

Borén tried to attach blame to Norelius, accusing him of intrigue to get his parish again, but Norelius denied this, and there is no evidence whatever that Norelius was guilty of misconduct. Before the congregation met to issue a call two of the members wrote to Hasselquist expressing the opinion that neither Borén nor

Norelius would be called, and inquiring about calling Erland Carlsson or Hasselquist.²

Norelius was called by both the Red Wing and Vasa congregations, and he wrote to Hasselquist asking what he should do. He wished Borén had been called, "but this was impossible."³

At the same time Norelius had a call to the congregation at Marine, which he declined. Hasselquist sought to interest him in going to New York (there was a promise of aid from Sweden for a pastor in New York) but Norelius replied "New York I cannot think of. If I were alone, it might be; but city life has never been to my liking, and I believe that the Lord has placed me in Minnesota. Here I feel the greatest desire to labor in the Lord's vineyard as the grace of God enables me to do."⁴

Though his term of service as home missionary did not end until October he moved to Red Wing in September. He wrote to Hasselquist and explained that it was "utterly impossible for me to stay in St. Paul. I sat there completely without means, had nothing to live on, nothing with which to pay rent—no contributions came for my salary. From some friends in Red Wing I was able to borrow enough so I could get away from St. Paul."⁵

Getting away from St. Paul did not mean the end of all troubles and tribulations. The Vasa congregation was in a state of turmoil because of different opinions about a site for a church. Six different places had been suggested while Borén was there and the people had voted, only to change their minds and call another meeting. The question was not settled until after the arrival of Norelius, and until eight or ten families left the congregation. This group organized a new congregation and called Borén as their pastor. He moved to the village of Goodhue and served those who had seceded from Vasa, and also made periodic visits to Stockholm, Wisconsin. He moved to the latter place in 1864, but died the following year, a victim of tuberculosis.⁶

At a special meeting on September 7 the Vasa people elected a committee of eleven, including Pastor Norelius, to choose a site. The spot agreed on was owned by a Dr. Whitmore in Wabasha, who refused to sell less than 80 acres. The price was \$320, and after several trips to Wabasha by the pastor and several meetings of the committee the deal was closed. The congregation approved, but purchased only forty acres of the land chosen by the committee. The other forty was soon disposed of.

Plans were now made for a church 40 feet long and 26 feet

wide. Some considered this altogether too large. No less than six special meetings were required for discussion and decision about the erection of the church. Norelius hoped that it would be ready for use in June, 1862. The Augustana Synod had been invited to meet in Vasa, the third annual meeting of the Synod, and the first one in Minnesota. Not until in April, a few weeks before the Synod was to meet, could they feel assured that the simple frame structure would be usable. Only the plain board walls and the roof were ready when the big day arrived. The only interior furnishings were the chancel rail and the pulpit. The pulpit was home-made, of rough boards covered with wall-paper. It was built up high on the front wall, with a stairway leading up to it. Norelius described it later as a rather flimsy affair, and he feared that both pulpit and preacher would come tumbling down as the powerful Rev. Jonas Swensson waxed eloquent in a sermon during synod week. However, no such unfortunate incidents happened. Perhaps the greatest accident during the week was that one preacher, known as one of the "refined" pastors, rose up from his bed in a log house attic one night and bumped his head against a ham hanging from a rafter. He asked for a new lodging place. The old pioneers thought it was a good joke. They had known days when a ham in the attic was something to dream about, and they thought life wasn't bad at all when you could sit up in bed and have a ham strike you on the head.⁷

Twenty-four pastors and 15 lay delegates attended the Synod in Vasa, and were housed in the homes of the members, who at this time numbered 134. T. N. Hasselquist was the president, Jonas Swensson was secretary. In the minutes of the convention Swensson remarked about the large attendance at the services, especially on Sunday, when people came from far and wide to spend almost the entire day in church. But the joy of this festive week in Vasa was mingled with great sadness, as news reached them from the South that the Third Minnesota Regiment, which included many Vasa men, had been captured at Murfreesboro, Tennessee and was being sent to the notorious prison at Andersonville.⁸

The war had already affected Minnesota to a great extent, and was to have a deeper effect before long. Fourteen percent of the state's population went into the Union Army. In Goodhue County it was sixteen percent. No other war had taken such a

toll of Minnesota manpower. Yet, because of a constant stream of new settlers the population of the state increased during the war. Wheat prices were high and the day was drawing near when wheat was proclaimed "king" in Minnesota.

Norelius, as well as the other pastors, was greatly concerned about the spiritual effects of the war, on the men in the army and on the population in general. Norelius' visits to Fort Snelling to conduct services have already been mentioned. He wrote frequently to men in southern army camps. He made arrangements to have church papers sent to them. He urged other congregations to do likewise. The Minnesota Conference appropriated money for the same purpose.

Norelius looked for spiritual seriousness among the people as the war dragged on year after year, and he was dismayed to see the very opposite instead, an increase of immorality and ungodliness. He wrote a stirring article in one of the papers, calling on the readers to ponder on some "Christian thoughts about the war."

"What is the cause of the War?" he asks. "Shall we blame the slave owners? Shall we blame the abolitionists?"

He indicates that the cause lies deeply rooted in human nature: "God punishes by means of war. In this war He punishes not for just one sin but many. Slavery was one national sin, but slavery is only a consequence of other great sins: Forgetting God; pride; unrestrained covetousness, which is a root of all kinds of evil. Coveting honor, coveting money, coveting sensuous enjoyment, these are the ungodly trinity which this nation has so greatly worshipped. Slavery is closely connected with these sins. Coveting honor leads to oppression. Coveting money leads to the desire to get rich by the sweat of others. Coveting pleasure leads to a desire to be served by others. God punishes such sins."⁹

Five men from Vasa died in the service of their country. Most of the others returned, though many settled in other communities. As in other parts of the state, the population of Vasa and surrounding regions increased considerably during the decade of the 1860's, many of the new settlers coming from Sweden, others from various places in America. All government land in the Vasa region had been taken before 1870.

Minnesota became a battleground during the War period, not of course by any invasions from the South, but because the Sioux Indians went on the warpath in the summer of 1862. The uprising had many causes, dating back particularly to the Treaty

of Traverse des Sioux, when the Indians were deceived into signing a "traders' paper" which gave most of their money to the white fur traders to cover the debts of individual Indians. This, together with many other real and fancied grievances, had made the Sioux tribes angry and sullen, and they were determined to drive the white men out of their ancestral hunting grounds west of the Mississippi.

The first blood was shed on August 17, 1862 at Acton, in Meeker County. On the following day the general massacre began, scores and hundreds of white people were killed, including many who had lived on friendly terms with their Indian neighbors for years. Among the victims were 13 members of a congregation in Kandiyohi County, whom Norelius had visited on his missionary journey in January, 1861. The congregation was reorganized a few years later by Andrew Jackson, as the Lebanon Lutheran Church of New London.¹⁰

Immediately on hearing the news of the massacre, and knowing that many Scandinavian settlers were in the western parts of the state, Norelius began to stake steps to alleviate the suffering of refugees. He wrote immediately to *Hemlandet* in Chicago giving a brief report of what had happened. The following week he gave further details, and announced that he would provide a home for orphans of the massacre.¹¹

Though he had not directly appealed for money generous offerings soon began to reach Norelius from congregations in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Minnesota. In an article dated October 26, he accounted for gifts totalling \$489.43, which had been received from the following places: Red Wing and Vasa, \$68.45; Attica, Indiana, \$32.50; Moline, Ill., \$25.00; Rockford, Ill., \$57.50; Christiania, Minn., \$13.25; Andover, Ill., \$63.00; Berlin [Sweden], Ill., \$26.25; Chicago, Ill., \$124.48; Geneva, Ill., \$63.00; McGregor, Iowa, \$11.00; Burlington, Iowa, \$10.00; individuals, \$5.00.¹²

Early in October the Minnesota Conference had elected Norelius, Andrew Jackson, and Johan Johanson as a committee to handle all funds given to aid the refugees. The committee used great care in allocating the funds, as may be seen from the reports that appeared in *Hemlandet*. The first report showed the following items paid out: "To three widows and their six children from Eagle Lake, whose husbands were killed, \$36.65 for 1 stove, food, rent, cloth, furniture, expenses for burial of one son." Other small amounts made a total of \$123.25 paid out.¹³

In January Norelius reported a total of \$573.03 received, and a balance of \$380.04 on hand, and by July 1 receipts had risen to \$743.70, with expenditures amounting to \$55.45. Between sixty and seventy families had received help. Three widows who were aged and ill had been cared for all the time since they came to Red Wing, and would need further care, according to the report.¹⁴

One of the pastors in the Conference, Cederstam at Scandian Grove, left Minnesota a few days after the massacre took place. Two members of his congregation had been murdered, and he was expecting that his parish would be scattered and disorganized. The Minnesota Conference adopted a resolution strongly disapproving Cederstam's action, but Norelius felt that he was justified, mainly because his family was highly wrought up and frightened.¹⁵

The little congregation at Red Wing, numbering about 80 members when Norelius came in 1861, saw a gradual growth, especially after the end of the war, and the little frame church built in 1856 became too small. In 1866 a brick church was built at a cost of \$8,000, and the congregation could soon call its own pastor.

Aside from his many duties, Norelius found time during this period to organize two institutions now owned and maintained by the Minnesota Conference. These are Gustavus Adolphus College and Vasa Children's Home, the college having its origin in 1862 and the children's home in 1865.

NOTES

¹Norelius, *Historia*, I, 655; 661f.; 671.

²Jacob Robertson and I. G. Pearson to T. N. Hasselquist, June 4, 1861 (MS).

³Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Aug. 6, 1861 (MS).

⁴T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Aug. 14, 1861 (MS); Norelius to Hasselquist, Aug. 27, 1861 (MS).

⁵Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Sept. 16, 1861 (MS).

⁶Norelius, *Historia*, I, 653, 673f.; Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Oct. 30, 1861, Feb. 11, 1863 (MSS).

⁷Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 214ff.; Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Apr. 19, 1862 (MS).

⁸Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 215.

⁹Norelius, in *Hemlandet*, Feb. 15, 1865.

¹⁰Folwell, *Minnesota*, II, gives a complete account of the Indian massacre. V. E. Lawson, *History of Kandiyohi County*, has a detailed account of events in that region.

¹¹*Hemlandet*, Aug. 27, and Sept. 3, 1862.

¹²*Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1862.

¹³*Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1862.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Jan. 14, July 1, 1863.

¹⁵*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 8, 1862, in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 171f.

Chapter 17

NORELIUS STARTS A SCHOOL

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE, St. Peter, Minnesota, had its beginning in Red Wing, in October, 1862, under the personal leadership of Eric Norelius. The events leading up to the establishment of the school go back several years prior to that time and since they concern Norelius and his relationship to the other brethren in the Church, these events need to be known and understood. The charge that Norelius was a "separatist" is very closely connected with his attitude and actions regarding the "school question."

The Swedish Lutherans who came to America in early colonial times, settling along the Delaware River beginning in 1638 were unable to maintain themselves as a Lutheran Church. One of the main reasons for this failure clearly was that they established no school for the training of pastors.

The Swedish immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century, especially such leaders among them as Esbjörn, Norelius, Hasselquist, and others, were well aware of the history of the Delaware colony. They were determined that such was not to be their own story.

How, when, and where those struggling immigrants could establish a school was not yet clear. These pastors had received a good education, Norelius at Capital University in Columbus, the others in Swedish universities. They knew the value of education, and felt that it would be best if all pastors were educated men.

While Norelius was in his first year as a student at Columbus he dreamed of the day when the Scandinavians would have their own school. In November, 1851, he wrote in his diary: "I had a letter from a Norwegian student, Christian Olsen, who was attending school in Hillsboro, Illinois. He expressed a fervent desire that we soon might have a Scandinavian school in this country, preferably in Chicago, and I agreed with him in this."¹

At a meeting of the Mississippi Conference in Andover, Illinois, December 1-4, 1854, attended by Esbjörn, Erland Carlsson, Hasselquist, and a few others, there was a discussion on the important question of training young men for the ministry, and almost everyone present expressed himself to the effect that this

question required the greatest attention and study by the pastors and the congregations, since to a large extent the future existence and growth of the congregation depended on this. Pastor Carlsson mentioned that he knew three young men who were suitable. Others named others. It was finally decided that the Conference delegates should seek out and encourage such young men, and that Pastor Carlsson should speak to, encourage, counsel, and help the three he had named.

A letter from Student E. Norelius was read, wherein the members of the Conference were heartily urged to give this serious thought, and because of the deplorable circumstances at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio, the Conference should very carefully consider the question of which school should be selected for the training of pastors for the Swedish Lutheran churches. After careful consideration it was decided that the congregations should send their students to Illinois State University, Springfield. Pastor Esbjörn, as one of the trustees of this institution, was asked to discuss privately with the theological professor, Dr. W. S. Harkney, the earnest wish of the Conference that the students should by all means and in everything be instructed in the pure Lutheran doctrine.²

This letter by Norelius, which led to the decision in favor of the school in Springfield rather than Capital University, is explained by Norelius in his history of the Augustana Synod:

"It seems from this decision in 1854 that there had been different opinions on the question of where to send ministerial candidates, and this is correct. The question was, whether it should be Columbus or Springfield.

"My attendance at Columbus may not have been of any importance in solving the question, but this fact at least made the institution in Columbus better known than the one in Springfield. The school in the former place was older and under the control of faithful Lutherans. The one in Springfield was just begun, and one did not know the confessional standpoint of the men who were in charge of it. . . .

"Furthermore, it may have had some significance at that time that Capital University, through its president, Rev. W. M. Reynolds, D.D., had received from the famous Jenny Lind \$1,500 as a basis for a Swedish professorship at Capital University, and he mentioned my attendance at the school as evidence that he was not talking in the air when he presented to her the need

of a Swedish professorship at the school. This took place in 1852, when Jenny Lind gave one of her concerts in Columbus. At the Conference meeting in Andover, Illinois, in December, 1854, our Swedish pastors knew that Miss Lind had given the above-mentioned donation for a Swedish professorship at Capital University. One may therefore ask, What was the reason why they passed by Columbus and adopted the resolution 'that we and our congregations send our students to Illinois State University, Springfield'? I think I can give some enlightenment regarding it. Earlier in the fall, when I went back to the school in Columbus after my vacation in Minnesota, I met L. P. Esbjörn in Andover and imparted to him the recent information which I had received from Columbus, that Dr. Reynolds had conducted himself in such a way that he had been compelled to resign from the presidency of the school and had moved away, unable to account for the funds that he had had charge of. Among these was the fund for the Swedish professorship. It was this information, I believe, which was the reason for the decision by the Conference in Andover. The strange and sad fact is that the same man, the same Dr. Reynolds, was elected president of Illinois State University, and was there before Esbjörn came to the place in 1858 to accept the position as Scandinavian professor. . . ."³

In the meantime Norelius had moved to Minnesota, and the question of a school in that region had been broached. The first mention of it was in 1856, when Peter Carlson wrote to Norelius consulting him about the possibility of getting an education. Carlson wrote, "Norelius does not consider it impossible, although I am somewhat old. And he offered that, if I would come to him for a year to begin with, he would, for some consideration, give me as much of his time as possible. The same offer included the Norwegian man, Halvor Strand, if he desired to come along."⁴

Nothing came of this proposition to have Norelius instruct Carlson and Strand.

In the summer of 1856 when Dr. W. A. Passavant made his first visit to Minnesota he called on Norelius in his pioneer log cabin at Vasa. Passavant entertained high hopes for the future of the Lutheran Church in Minnesota, and discussed plans for a school. Norelius went with him to look for land that might be suitable, and they considered a location near White Rock. But these plans brought no results except that the men got their feet wet so badly that Passavant remembered it years later.⁵

In 1858, when the question of a new Synod in Minnesota was being considered, the brethren in Illinois expressed fear that this would mean an end to any support from Minnesota for the Scandinavian professorship at Springfield. Norelius sought to allay these fears by an editorial in his *Minnesota Posten*:

"It has been set forth as an argument against the organizing of a new Synod here, that this step would be ruinous to the Scandinavian professorship in Springfield; one ought to co-operate in the establishment of this school, and not now scatter our forces. In reply to this we beg leave to say that the establishment of a synod here would not scatter our forces for this purpose, but rather have the opposite result. It is not the intention that we here in Minnesota at once can proceed to establish an institution of learning; this must be left to the future. We therefore have no other way than to use the nearest Lutheran school, which is in Springfield, Illinois. . . ."⁶

Since the Swedish pastors did not enter the Minnesota Synod, and since Norelius moved out of the state in the fall of 1858, the question of a school in Minnesota lay dormant for some two or three years. And during that time the picture changed entirely when Esbjörn resigned from Springfield and the Scandinavians seceded from the Synod of Northern Illinois. At the Scandinavian Conference meeting in April, 1860, when they formally withdrew from the Synod of Northern Illinois, they elected a committee to bring in resolutions relative to the establishment of their own school. At the organization of the Augustana Synod in June a constitution was adopted, establishing Augustana College and Theological Seminary, to be temporarily located in Chicago. However, it was the intention of the majority to locate the institution permanently in some place where an investment in land could be made, and a resolution to this effect was adopted. The board was instructed to study this proposition and report to Synod.

To Norelius there was no a priori reason why the institution should be in Illinois, and he immediately began to work for its removal to Minnesota. He soon learned that Esbjörn was opposed to any sort of colony plan for the school and that he now was planning to resign from the professorship in order to return to Sweden. Esbjörn wrote, "My homesickness sets in and if God shows me the way, I will return home. I came here by His guidance, and by His guidance I will leave. It seems to me as though

the Lord has used unworthy me as a little pioneer here and that He no longer needs me here. . . ."⁷

Writing under the nom de plume of "Minnesotus" in *Hemlandet*, Norelius gave his arguments for moving the synod's school to Minnesota:

"Here and there I have heard various ones expressing their opinions about the matter of a colony to be established by the Augustana Synod for Augustana Seminary, and they all think it should be in Minnesota, if one is to be established, and I don't think, as some might feel, that this is self-interest. I believe that men with insight will see it from this viewpoint, that the colony should not be far from the existing settlements. And where are most of the permanent settlements? One must answer, Minnesota."⁸

At this time plans were under way to form a colony, so as to make sure that the school would have profit from the land and at the same time make sure that a large Swedish Lutheran settlement would surround the institution. Esbjörn was strongly opposed to all such plans, definitely favoring Chicago as a permanent location. Hasselquist favored the plan for a colony and finally pushed it through to reality at Paxton, Illinois. He wrote a reply to the article by "Minnesotus" in which he argued that though Minnesota had more Swedes, Illinois had larger congregations, more able to give to the general work. Minnesota is the farthest state in the northwest, and as far as possible from Illinois. Locations were already being considered in Grundy County, Iowa, and if the colony is located there it will soon have direct railroad connections with St. Peter, Minnesota.⁹

"Minnesotus" answered and pointed out the dangers involved in the colony plan. The Seminary, he said, should not buy land and sell to settlers. It will become involved too much in land deals. Those who value the idea of living near the school should buy land, several thousand acres, and the Seminary should buy only a section or two which it should rent out.¹⁰

Hasselquist cut the argument short by saying he did not agree, and that Synod had already voted for the colony plan.¹¹

Norelius wrote a personal letter to Hasselquist in which he said, "The remarks about the colonization plan are not mine, but those of others whom I have heard. As far as I am concerned I still have no opinion at all, either about the plan itself or the place. I have determined that as long as I am uncertain

I shall do nothing about the matter either for or against. I would gladly see that both the colony and the school would flourish but when I see so many difficulties I don't dare to say yes or no, but must wait and stand aside and consider the matter for a while."¹² While Hasselquist was busily seeking land in Illinois and Iowa, he gave Norelius and the others in Minnesota a chance to prove that they really wanted the school. He wrote to Norelius:

"Officially and as *Secretary* of the Board of Augustana Seminary I inform you and Håkan Olson or anyone who is willing and available to find a site in Minnesota, where there is a good place for a settlement and where our school could be established. There is much anxiety among the people as to where it is to be. A thorough investigation should therefore be made and a report sent either to Brother Carlsson or me *before* the first of October. I have heard that 10,000 or 12,000 acres of prairie land could be had at Point Douglas. Would it not be well to inquire about it?"¹³

It was a rather large assignment for a committee of two to look into the matter of a school and colony location involving a land deal of thousands of acres, and to be able to report in a month, and this just at the time when Norelius was moving from St. Paul to Red Wing. Whether the investigations were made before October 1 is not clear, but a report was published in *Hemlandet* in December. Norelius and Olson had found that land north of Point Douglas was \$5.00 per acre, which was considered too high. In Dakota county, ten or eleven miles from Hastings, they had found an entire township almost unpopulated, and the land was \$2.50 to \$3.00 per acre, but the terms were not suitable for the project. Therefore they reported no favorable prospects for the Seminary colony in Minnesota.¹⁴

In the meantime Hasselquist had been investigating land in Butler and Grundy counties, Iowa, but happened to come during a rainy spell, and did not venture too far from the railroad, for fear he could not get back. However, his report was not altogether unfavorable, and for a time it seemed as if the deal would go through. The opponents of Minnesota sought to point out the spiritual dangers of settling in that state. One writer issued the following warning:

"If opportunity comes for colonization at aforementioned place [Applington, Butler County, Iowa] and someone nevertheless in misguided self-interest goes and settles in some hidden corner of Minnesota or some other place where there is no hope of a

Swedish Lutheran congregation, and sits there starving spiritually, as now is the case in many places, and what is worse, he thereby becomes guilty of his children's falling away from the Christian faith in which they have promised to train them; should anyone have the slightest pity for them in that fate?"¹⁵

Esbjörn continued to fight against the colonization scheme. As president of the school in Chicago he wrote to Norelius:

"I still believe that the College should be in Chicago, and not be dragged out in the country, at least not far out in the west. The question of a site for the College has made me consider the country more explicitly and I believe that the cities around the Great Lakes (especially Lake Michigan) in the future will be America's important places. Where do you find the combination of fertile soil, open coal fields, inexhaustible forests, rich metals, unlimited fishing, access to water power and to navigation, which Lake Michigan and the cities in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan can offer? No place. . . . Therefore I believe that we should encourage our people to settle in the cities on Lake Michigan rather than to drag them and their institution out in the barren cities and away from the world markets."¹⁶

Thus it is evident that the whole matter of where Augustana College and Theological Seminary should be located was a wide open question in the early part of 1862. Opinions were strongly divided, and there was no sign of a crystallization in favor of any of the proposed locations.

Meanwhile rumors were beginning to reach Minnesota that the Seminary might be moved farther away rather than closer to Minnesota, and bitterness increased. Andrew Jackson, pastor in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, wrote to Norelius that "a college is needed in Minnesota, and it should be in St. Paul. People here do not care if the Seminary be moved to New Orleans."¹⁷

Not only pastors but laymen in Minnesota were actively working for the establishment of a school in the state. Håkan Swedberg, a farmer at Center City, who had attended school under Norelius in Chicago shortly after his arrival in this country in 1853, wrote a long letter to Norelius about his hopes for a school:

"My dear Pastor Norelius: Permit me to lay a certain matter before you. Is it not time that we begin to think about a school for our young people in Minnesota? From the recent Synod we have had the sad experience that our leading men down there do not consider it at all necessary to pay any atten-

tion to the many Scandinavians who live in our state, but on the contrary, try to bring the institution still farther away from us, and not only that, but that they plainly gave evidence, both in word and deed, that they did not intend to give the slightest considerations to our interest in the school. I, for my part, look upon this matter as being of such importance for our own welfare and our children's future that we must not stand as helpless on-lookers and see how it will go. To me it seems as if the Lord God himself had prepared the whole plan and now only requires of us that we should take the matter seriously and put our hand to the project. We now have a suitable lot in St. Paul, on which we can prepare to build a church, with a school room underneath. Even now there is immediate opportunity to get a room for the school in the rented meeting house at Johan Johanson's. There is also room for lodgings for several young men. Pastor Norelius can be at liberty at any time to serve as teacher, and Borén can take over the pastoral duties in the congregations. Can we not, in these and other circumstances, see the finger of God? We know that several young men from up here intend to go to the school in Chicago this fall. We believe there are six for sure. Now no one of them can go down there, himself and baggage, under \$20.00 each, and then what will it cost to support a young man in Chicago compared with what it would cost in St. Paul, where we could go to them and bring them food and clothing and where we could take them with our own horse and wagon? The difference would be considerable even for one term. My question is: How will the teacher get his salary? Let all our pastors in Minnesota call special meetings at once in their congregations and plainly lay the matter before the people, and I am certain that the project will go forward, and that we shall find the people interested and willing to contribute to the success of the project, and these business meetings ought to be held before the Conference this fall so that our pastors and delegates then can discuss and counsel together about this important matter. I ask for a few lines in reply as soon as possible. A humble friend, H. L. Swedberg. Greet your dear wife and others. P. S. If this general school cannot come into being this winter, would not Norelius be willing to take upon himself to teach two youths about twenty years old in his own home this winter? And if so, on what conditions and at what price? It will cost them \$80 to travel to Chicago, and then what shall they live on down there?"¹⁸

These propositions were of course soon communicated to the other pastors of the Conference, and Peter Carlson replied that he did not like the Synod's decision about the Seminary. As to the suggestions for a school in Minnesota, he said, "I want it erected in harmony with the brethren there in Illinois and to stand under the Synod's control." He doubted that this was the time for the Conference to start a paper. He feared that "it will come to nought with the Seminary now in war time." He did not think it was God's will to locate a church institution outside all boundaries "with eyes on empty promises of thousands of dollars rather than on promises in God's Word."¹⁹

A Conference meeting was scheduled to be held in Scandian Grove in October, but on account of the Indian outbreak the place was changed to East Union. There the matter came to a head. The discussions personally and by mail had prepared the pastors and the delegates to take a definite step. On October 10 the following resolution was duly adopted:

"Since the need of teachers in our congregations is so great that we can longer bear it, it was

"Resolved, That Brother Norelius be asked to assume the duty of teaching those young men whom our congregations may send to him, that they may be trained and prepared to teach school both in Swedish and English. Brother Norelius accepted this assignment."²⁰

Thus the school in Minnesota was launched, and there can be no doubt but that H. L. Swedberg's letter had influenced the decision. He soon had occasion to prove that he was in earnest when he pleaded for a school. The first student to present himself to Norelius was a twenty-year-old young man by the name of Jonas Magnuson from Chisago Lake. He was a stepson of H. L. Swedberg. (He later changed his name to Magny.)

Jonas was not a stranger to Norelius. They had met at Chisago Lake in October, 1858, when Norelius was there for the organization meeting of the Minnesota Conference. The youth, then sixteen years old, revealed an interest in the meeting, and sought to be of help in whatever way he could. Norelius at once felt that here was one who would be a servant in the vineyard of Swedish Lutheranism in America. In this Norelius was not mistaken. Ordained to the ministry of the Augustana Synod in 1870 Jonas Magny served as a pastor in the Minnesota Conference forty years.

The Minnesota Conference did not appropriate any money to help Norelius establish a school. No board or committee was elected to supervise the venture. No official plans were made for the future. No resolution was adopted to bring the matter before the Synod.

The school was, in one sense, the private responsibility of Norelius, since no one was elected to have authority over him, or even to counsel with him in regard to the details of the project. There was not even a specific request that Norelius should report to the Conference.

From this it can be seen that the school started in the simplest possible way: One teacher and one student, free to teach and to study as they wished. Jonas Magny was accepted as a member of the household in the Norelius home, and undoubtedly the pastor's study was the school room as long as Magny was the only student.

Others were soon added to the list. On October 25 Peter Carlson wrote that four or five students want to go from Carver. "If we had snow I could drive them and their provisions; the boat trip costs so much." On November 17 Andrew Jackson was visiting at Scandian Grove and had found a married man there who wanted to attend school. Before the end of November Norelius had about a dozen pupils.

The Minnesota Conference had not officially asked permission or approval, nor even announced their intention, in the matter of starting a school, and it seems that they were in no hurry to report to the president of the Synod, Rev. Hasselquist, when the project was begun. From the correspondence it appears that Esbjörn was the first of the Illinois pastors to know what was in the wind. He wrote to Norelius:

"That you in Minnesota desire an elementary school, I consider perfectly in order, if it is possible that you can have one, not only to satisfy the desire and need of our pastors and congregations there, but also because it is in line with my previous opinion that we need elementary schools in some of the large settlements. The developments in regard to the college question and the present situation convinces me that I was right in my views at the Synod in 1861, although I received no support but it was left to the mercy of contempt."²¹

When Norelius began to order school books from the Swedish Lutheran Publication Society in Chicago, his cousin, Jonas Eng-

berg, who worked there, began to prick up his ears. "It has been rumored that you have started a school of learning and you are the professor! I did not consider it true, but requisition of books seem to indicate something like it. Soon we will have on hand Kurtz's History in English, both Sacred and Church. We also have Graul in English. In case it is so, then inform me explicitly, and thus you also have an [Orphan's] Home, and with these two a beginning is made for your two cherished institutions about which you have often thought and dreamed. If it is the Lord's will, they will flourish."²²

This is a revealing letter. Jonas Engberg had come to America at New Year's, 1855. Having been a schoolmate of his cousin Eric Norelius in Sweden, they became intimates and at times collaborators in America. Engberg taught parochial school at Vasa during Norelius' first pastorate there, and also helped with the publication of *Minnesota Posten*. He probably knew Eric Norelius as well as anyone did. His reference to the school and the home as the cherished institutions (*älsklingsanstalter*) of Norelius is an indication that Norelius had confided his dreams and hopes to his cousin. That Engberg refers to the "Home" as already existing is strange in view of the fact that the Vasa Children's Home was not started until 1865. However, it was in the fall of 1862 that Norelius helped to provide a home for refugees from the Indian outbreak, just a month before he began the school project.

How the "rumor" of the school in Minnesota reached Engberg is told in a letter from Erland Carlsson, written a few days later:

"Before Gustaf Esping [of Cannon Falls, Minn.] left he mentioned to Engberg that he had received a letter from you in which you stated that you had already started a school of ten or twelve students. As you have not mentioned a single word about it in your letters to me, it seems as though you either have no faith in your old friend, or else you feared to relate such news to me. The professor [L. P. Esbjörn] says that you have written to him about the matter but as a plan for the future. I will therefore hasten to assure you, dear Brother, that rather than that I and others with whom I have talked about a school in Minnesota are against such a project, we are instead happy about it and do what we can to further it when it is done in the right spirit and not in a spirit of faction. One of our brothers

wrote to me last fall and accused us down here of a few things, which was both unjust and unlovable. I answered the letter sincerely but in a lovable way. I said that in unity and with the Lord's blessing we could more easily erect two schools than one by quarreling and strife. I am assured that neither you nor anyone of the brethren will want to cause any separation. I am also assured that a school in Minnesota as a preparatory institution to our Seminary would by the grace of God be a great blessing to our church and an opportunity for our friends in Minnesota to do more for education than heretofore has been done. It was therefore my proposal from the beginning that at the same time the Seminary was established down here, a preparatory school should be erected in Minnesota. If this plan can be accomplished then it will make me eternally happy and I will thank God for it. I love our Seminary. I have worked and sacrificed willingly for it and I will do so as long as the Lord gives me life and strength. I wish to have our theological institution in such a place, where according to my opinion, it will have the best future and be of the greatest use. I have not found as yet that Minnesota is the right place and therefore I have been against moving it there. But I have thought that a school could and should also be established under our Synod in Minnesota."²³

Hasselquist had been busy during the fall of 1862 with the project so dear to him, a colony where the school could be located, with Swedish settlers buying land all around it. The proposal to locate in Iowa was found unsuitable. Then the Illinois Central Railroad Company offered a proposition at Paxton, Illinois, 100 miles south of Chicago, whereby the Seminary was to buy 5,000 acres of land at \$6.00 per acre (said to be worth \$10.00) and to receive a commission of \$1.00 per acre for the first 20,000 acres sold to colonists, and fifty cents per acre after that. Hasselquist was convinced of the soundness of the plan, and worked for it with heart and soul. Not until in February, 1863, did he find time to write to Norelius. His first remarks concerning the school were entirely favorable. He was glad a school had been started. "From there we will get school teachers and ministers; God bless your work."²⁴

By a strange coincidence Hasselquist was able to inform Norelius in the same letter that he would have some money for several of the pastors in Minnesota. He had "at last" received some money from Fosterlandsstiftelsen in Sweden for the salary

of a home missionary. He had decided to give some to the "underpaid pastors" in Minnesota. In April he sent the money, \$50.00 each to Beckman and Borén. It had also occurred to Hasselquist that Norelius did not receive his full salary for the year he worked as travelling missionary, so he was now given \$25.00 of the gift from Sweden. Hasselquist stated that he had \$45.00 left of the donation. All except \$25.00 had gone to Minnesota. But along with this generosity to the Minnesota brethren he sent his real feelings regarding their school:

"Another school should not now be undertaken: 1st, you will not get very far; if \$1,000 were secured, could you get house and lot for that, and pay a teacher? Is this God's will? You, dear brother, are the only one who could be teacher, and then your churches would be without a pastor; 2nd, a school started in Minnesota would cause anxiety in Illinois when we are trying to get our first school on a better footing; 3rd, we would get no help from Sweden for a missionary pastor; 4th, our country is in such conflict that we should be more considerate; we have the funds for Paxton, if anything will be done about the school there; perhaps next year the conflict will end, and I know then our countrymen in Illinois and elsewhere will be interested in the cause; continue, dear brother, with the work you now have; when the time comes I will work and sacrifice for a school in Minnesota; now it is best to have just one iron in the fire; let nothing hinder us so we can work together in the future as we have in the past."²⁵

But it was too late for Hasselquist to prevent the establishment of a school in Minnesota. His promise to help "when the time comes" naturally leads to the question, When would the time have come that Hasselquist would help establish a school in Minnesota? After twelve years of hard work and sacrifice for the colonization project at Paxton, during which time he was president of the school and leader of the colony, the school faced financial failure, and a new location was found at Rock Island. The first years at Rock Island were also filled with financial problems, and it hardly seems likely that as long as Hasselquist lived he would have felt that Augustana was so well established that he could afford to start a new school in Minnesota. Though neither Norelius nor Hasselquist could foresee what would come to pass, each one of them was utterly sincere in his own viewpoint. Whether one of these men deserves to be called a rebel and a schismatic, and

the other one an autocratic dictator is a matter of opinion. Whether one was a "Minnesota man" and the other a "Synod man" is largely a matter of one's viewpoint. The fact is that two schools were started at about the same time, Augustana in Illinois and Norelius' school (later to become Gustavus Adolphus College) in Minnesota. Each school has had a role to play in the development of the Church.

NOTES

¹*Early Life*, 153.

²*Minutes of Miss. Conf.*, Dec. 1-4, 1854 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 58f.

³Norelius, *Historia*, II, 258f.

⁴Yearbook, Swedish Historical Society of America, 1923-1924, p. 93, quoted in Conrad Peterson, *Remember Thy Past*, 12.

⁵Norelius, *Historia*, I, 640f.; W. A. Passavant to Norelius, Mar. 20, 1870 (MS).

⁶*Minnesota Posten*, May 25, 1858.

⁷L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Oct. 3, 1861 (MS).

⁸*Hemlandet*, July 27, 1861.

⁹Hasselquist in *Hemlandet*, July 24, 1861.

¹⁰*Hemlandet*, August 7, 1861.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Aug. 14, 1861.

¹²Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Aug. 27, 1861 (MS).

¹³T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Aug. 30, 1861 (MS).

¹⁴*Hemlandet*, Dec. 23, 1861.

¹⁵"Kolonist" in *Hemlandet*, Feb. 26, 1862.

¹⁶L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Jan. 30, 1862 (MS).

¹⁷Andrew Jackson to Norelius, May 20, 1862 (MS).

¹⁸H. L. Swedberg to Norelius, Aug. 1, 1862 (MS) in Gustavus Adolphus College Archives. A very similar letter had been written by C. A. Hedengran, Swedberg's pastor, on July 14, to Norelius. Hedengran also suggested a "Minnesota Synod" and "our own paper."

¹⁹Peter Carlson to Norelius, Aug. 13, 1862 (MS).

²⁰*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 8, 1862 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 171.

²¹L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Oct. 21, 1862 (MS). The expression "elementary school" did not have the same connotation to Esbjörn and Norelius as it has to us now, but more nearly corresponds to our high school or academy.

²²J. Engberg to Norelius, Nov. 21, 1862 (MS).

²³Erland Carlsson to Norelius, Nov. 26, 1862 (MS).

²⁴T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Feb. 17, 1863 (MS).

²⁵T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Apr. 22, 1863 (MS).

Chapter 18

ST. ANSGAR'S ACADEMY

PASTOR ANDREW JACKSON, who served a widespread parish in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, in the summer of 1862, was conducting worship at the home of the Johannes Lundborg family at West Lake in the forenoon of Wednesday, August 20. At the close of the service, a little boy, Peter Broberg, son of Daniel P. Broberg, came running all out of breath, with the news that the Indians had arrived at the Broberg cabin about two miles away, and that they were abusing the children who had been left at home.

Anders P. Broberg, brother and near neighbor of Daniel, and the four Lundborg brothers, started at once for the Broberg cabins by a shortcut through the woods. They found the band of Indians there, all of whom were known and familiar to them. They pretended to be on a friendly errand, greeting and chatting with them. All at once the Indians at some pre-arranged signal gave simultaneous fire, killing A. P. Broberg where he sat at ease at the table in his cabin. Johannes Nilson, a half brother of Mrs. Broberg, and four small children were slaughtered in the cabin, or in the yard as they tried to escape. Anders, Gustav, and Lars Lundborg were all shot and killed.

Other members of the two Broberg families met a similar fate, except a boy in one of the families, and a girl in the other. Thirteen persons in all lost their lives. Pastor Jackson was conducting another service in the afternoon at Norway Lake when the dreadful news reached him. He drove his horse at utmost speed to warn the Nest Lake settlers, and most of them escaped. Altogether twenty members of his parish were massacred, and the rest fled.¹

The result was that Jackson's parish was dispersed, and it was impossible to foresee whether it soon could be re-established. The Minnesota Conference had been appealing to the Synod for a Norwegian travelling missionary, but now Jackson, a Swede, was given a call to travel among the many scattered settlements in Minnesota. This assignment had already been given him before

the Conference meeting in East Union, October 8-10, 1862, and he had already visited several places.

When the next Conference meeting was held in January, 1863, at Scandian Grove, it was reported that Norelius had eleven pupils in his school at Red Wing, and the Conference rejoiced especially over the news that several of the students intended to go to Augustana Seminary to study for the ministry. Two problems now faced the Conference: The permanent location of the school, and the financial support of the school. The former question was postponed until the next meeting. The financial problem could not be postponed. Mr. Johan Johanson in St. Paul was elected treasurer of the school, and it was voted "that the Conference lay it on the heart of Brother Jackson that he, during his activities as travelling missionary seek to arouse the interest of the congregations in this school, and when he finds opportunity, to gather funds for it."²

The first official report of money gathered for the school was given by the treasurer, Mr. Johanson, in February, 1864, when there was \$847.00 on hand. There is no detailed report as to amounts received from the various congregations, but letters written by pastors early in 1863 show something of the beginning of Jackson's campaign for funds. Peter Carlson at East Union wrote to Norelius on March 18: "Brother Andrew Jackson was here five days; has subscribed \$158.00 for the school and thinks he will get more." Another letter from Carlson written about the same time shows that he and his people were thinking of getting the school located in their settlement.

On May 5 Jackson himself wrote to Norelius: "Now is the time to get money for the school; I cast the net out for the first time at Scandian Grove and got a good haul." He indicated his intentions to go to Afton, Marine, Chisago Lake, Christiania, Cannon Falls, then to Red Wing.

During this time Norelius was busy teaching his students, but also planning for someone else to take charge of the school. His choice for this difficult and important position was Jackson.

Jackson, a schoolmaster before he was ordained to the ministry, attended the examination day and closing exercises of the school in Red Wing on April 30, 1863, and with practiced eye and ear took note of the progress the students had made. When he learned that Norelius wanted to be free from the responsibility

of being the teacher, and that he himself was suggested as the one to carry on the work, he wrote:

"In a letter which you some time ago wrote to Brother P. Carlson you made a suggestion that in the fall you would remove the school to St. Paul, and that I was to take charge of it. That this proposal would stir up all kinds of thoughts is natural. First of all, doubts have arisen in my mind and these were stirred up especially during my visit in Red Wing at examination time. When I saw the masterful way in which you had conducted and guided the school I became—at the same time that I was happy over the progress the students have made in such a short time—for my own part cast down and discouraged. And I said in my heart: He (Norelius) is just the man to take care of this institution; it is better for me to accept a call to some church. In truth, there are two subjects in which I feel inferior, and they are of great importance to the students if they are to get a fundamental education: In English I am less than average and in music I am useless. The first difficulty can be helped by studying; but in the latter I see no way out. I am greatly interested in music for the young people and if the saying is true, 'Where there is a will there is a way,' then perhaps love, which is inventive, can find a way. Another consideration, which is not the least one, is support of the teacher. However, on that point I for my part feel less worried. I want to state my opinion: The teacher in St. Paul can hardly get along on less than \$400 a year. My proposal is this: If the Conference dares to promise one-half (\$200) then I would try to get the other half. This I could do if I could keep my horse and once in a while visit the congregations nearby. I could visit Gotaholm and Scandia once a month. (Brother Carlson would certainly be pleased with this.) I could visit Afton a couple of times a month if Brother Pehrson is willing to relinquish his rights there (the Conference should advise him on this). The congregation in St. Paul will have to do something for the service it will receive and that will not be so little. Lastly, the students will have to pay tuition, the amount to be determined by the Conference. (I do, however, believe that this amount should be as little as possible, especially for those who are willing to be in the service of the church.) With this in view, not without some fear, but in Jesus' name and with confidence in His help, I declare to the Conference my readiness to accept the position as teacher at our school, to which I should have a

regular call from the Conference, which should be in my hands before the next Synod, when my assignment as travelling missionary expires and I consequently must accept some call. . . . If you would be willing to continue with the school under the above-mentioned circumstances, you would please both me and the Conference, which surely cannot without regret see the school go out of your hands, when, as to training and disposition, you are so well adapted for it. (I do not say this to flatter you, but with sincere conviction.)”³

Jackson realized well that it was no sinecure that was offered him, but he had given serious consideration to the future of the school and was willing to give himself fully to the realization of his cherished hopes for the infant institution. He had been one of those who strongly urged the establishment of a school in Minnesota.

He had also carefully considered the school's relationship to the Synod, and had conferred with some of the brethren in Illinois about it. In the letter to Norelius quoted above he wrote:

“. . . I have not heard any reproof on account of our school but just the opposite, as our brethren down here even have a certain amount of interest in it.”⁴

“Brothers Carlsson, Esbjörn, and Andreen openly explained to me that they considered Hasselquist's fear to be ungrounded. We can thus expect support from that direction, provided our school is embodied with the Synod and can be considered as a branch of the Seminary; they were all in for that. I do believe that the definite steps and measures which we have taken lately have brought the brethren to the present conviction; they naturally could see that they would aggravate the matter if they opposed it. For my part I have also been convinced from the very beginning that it should be embodied with the Seminary and that for three reasons: (1) It would, by being so embodied, have a greater reputation; (2) its future would be more secured; (3) it would be a link between us and our brothers down here, and such a link is very much needed in these times of ravings by the devil. I also think that the Minnesota Conference should take a few more definite steps and measures, without placing any hindrance in the way of embodying the school with the Synod, mainly it will be the Minnesota Conference that will have to manage and direct it and be responsible for it. I have thought a great deal on this matter during this trip.”

At the Conference meeting in the Norwegian Church at Christiania, Dakota County, Minnesota in June, 1863, a number of resolutions were adopted relative to the school. The next school year was to be in two terms, October 1 to December 18, and January 6 to April 15. The school was to stay in Red Wing until the Conference decided otherwise. A committee of three (Peter Carlson, J. P. C. Borén, and Håkan Olson) was elected to call a teacher, with instructions to consider Andrew Jackson first. The Conference promised to pay \$200 as salary for the six months of school.

The school curriculum was to be planned by a committee of the Conference together with the faculty of Augustana Theological Seminary. Norelius and Pastor John Pehrson of Marine were the men chosen for this duty.

As to a permanent location it was reported that Vasa, St. Paul, and Carver had been proposed, and all congregations in the Conference should vote on this question, the votes to be counted at the next Conference meeting.

A board of directors was to be elected at the next Conference meeting. In order to place the school in the right relationship to the Synod and Seminary, it was resolved that "since this school is not only to be a general educational institution for Scandinavians in Minnesota but also a preparatory school for those who intend to enter the Seminary, the Conference at the next Synod, requests that the Synod recommend it."⁵

The Synod at its meeting in Chicago shortly afterwards accepted the new child into the family. A constitution was adopted, in which the school received its first name: Minnesota Elementary School. (As previously mentioned, this name had a different meaning than that which now is generally understood by the term "elementary school." The Swedish "elementarskola" signified an institution for secondary education.)

The Board of Trustees was to be nominated by the Minnesota Conference and elected or "ratified" by Synod. The first board members thus elected were: Eric Norelius and Håkan Olson of Red Wing for four years; C. A. Hedengran and Håkan Swedberg of Chisago Lake for three years; Peter Carlson, Carver, and Olof Anderson of Götaholm for two years; Nils Olsen of Christiania and Johan Johanson of St. Paul for one year. Norelius was re-elected to another four-year term on the board in 1867, and again in 1871.⁶

The question of the location was settled (temporarily) when the results of the voting were announced at the Conference meeting in Chisago Lake in October, 1863. There were 409 votes for Carver, 278 for St. Paul, and 242 for Vasa. East Union, three miles from the village of Carver, became the home of the school for the next twelve years.⁷

Jackson and others had definitely favored St. Paul, sensing the strategic importance of locating the school in the capital of the state, but the Swedish population in the city was still at a low figure and the Swedish Lutheran congregation was small. Since only the men voted, there probably were not over a dozen votes cast in St. Paul. In view of this it is remarkable that there were 278 votes for locating the school in the city. The majority of the church members throughout the Conference would be swayed by the more immediate prospects, which naturally would favor a rural area where there was a strong Swedish settlement. Chisago Lake was the largest congregation, but the pastor, C. A. Hedengran, did not seek to have the school brought to his parish, although it was "a big settlement with many willing people, but it is on the edge of Minnesota."⁸

Norelius, it seems, did not actively work for any of the proposed locations. In a letter to Hasselquist he stated a plan different from that which was espoused by the other Minnesota pastors:

"With respect to the gathering of funds for a school in Minnesota, I may mention that this has been done, as far as I know only by Brother Jackson, and that on his own responsibility. I believe he now has over \$300 on hand for the school, and he hopes to gather \$1,000. His and the other brethren's plan is to build a church in St. Paul with sufficient room for the school, and I believe he would be willing to take charge of the school there next fall. In such a plan I have not as yet had any confidence; but the brethren seem to have such strong faith in it that nothing can shake them. However, my plan for our school has been different since first we began to consult together about the matter. My idea was that we should without further ado get us a fairly good folk school (folkskola) in each of the three districts, Chisago, Carver, and Goodhue counties; that these schools could be managed by the pastor of the congregation together with a school teacher; that if one could not begin at the same time in the three places, then begin in one; that each district would support its school, etc. Such

schools are our greatest need, and they would exert a tremendous influence on the great mass of people, which a distant high school cannot do. But if a preparatory school can be established in Minnesota I certainly do not want to set myself against it, and 'disappointment in Illinois' should not arise with respect to it if it could be done now. You can see therefore that I certainly have no intention of leaving my congregations to take charge of any school in St. Paul. The Lord has given me an open door here and has blessed my weak labors far above my expectations. In Vasa the new church is already too small; peace and unity reign within the congregation, and a serious awakening seems to be spreading around us. I could not leave this field now. If the brethren should desire that I continue to teach school and if I could get a little help with it, I should try to do it, otherwise I am satisfied whichever way it goes. If better opportunities can be found in other places I shall rejoice over it.

"Any opposition down there to a school in Minnesota, no matter how reasonable and sensible, will not be well received here. One should not wonder at that. I believe therefore that it will not do to block it, for this would irritate the people here beyond measure. If I had been present at the last Conference meeting I should have set myself against all publicizing of the matter and then I believe no difficulties would have arisen. It was of such a nature that it would not have hurt to leave it yet for a time hidden. . . ."

That Norelius actually favored the parochial school idea is evident from other sources, and also from the fact that both Red Wing and Vasa had such schools for many years. But it seems from his letter to Hasselquist that he was exceedingly anxious to allay the suspicions of Hasselquist regarding the school in Minnesota and to give notice that since the project was being supported actively by the other brethren even more than by Norelius himself, it would not do for the Illinois men to try to stop them. The Minnesota Conference was going to have a school, and the brethren in Illinois might as well get reconciled to that fact. Such was the tenor of Norelius' letter to Hasselquist.

Peter Carlson was convinced that his parish was the right place, and he had succeeded in getting out the vote, with the result that the fall term of 1863 opened at that place, with the log church, erected in 1855, as the school building. Rev. Andrew Jack-

son had accepted a call to serve as teacher, and the school was for the next dozen years often referred to as "Jackson's school."

The school which Norelius had begun at Red Wing and which Jackson continued at East Union was unequivocally and unashamedly Christian and Lutheran in spirit and purpose. There was, as yet, no other Lutheran school in the state. The Methodists had established Hamline University in Red Wing in 1854, but it was later moved to St. Paul; the Roman Catholic Benedictine Order had started St. John's Seminary near St. Cloud in 1856. The University of Minnesota had been established by the first territorial legislature in 1851, but did not become a reality until 1869.

Jackson was serious and somewhat stern, though always with the purpose of inculcating Christian knowledge and genuine faith in his students. Not only was regular instruction given in Bible history and church history but the students were required to attend morning and evening devotions which occupied about an hour each day. Pastoral supervision was also exercised over the students by Pastor Carlson. Academically the school could not be considered advanced, and the teacher had to face the problem of arranging courses to suit students from the age of ten to past fifty. The school was co-educational from the very first year in Red Wing, and two girls who studied under Norelius later became the wives of two men who served at the head of the school in East Union. These were Mrs. Andrew Jackson and Mrs. J. J. Frodeen.

The school, given the name St. Ansgar's Academy in 1865, (when Swedish Lutherans were observing the 1000th anniversary of the death of St. Ansgar) had three main objectives: To provide a general education; to train teachers; and to prepare for entrance to Augustana Seminary.

At the close of the first school year in East Union Jackson was able to report that three young men were ready to go on to the Seminary, John Nilson, J. G. Lagerstrom, and Jonas Magnuson (Magny). All three were recommended by the Conference, accepted by the Seminary, and in due time (were) ordained to the ministry.¹⁰

Peter Carlson and his parishioners showed that they really wanted the school. Of all the 500 or more students who attended during the Carver period, about half were from Carver County, Financially also East Union and West Union contributed more

than any other congregations. Peter Carlson and others conceived the idea of building a flour mill, with Bevens Creek, a few miles from East Union, furnishing the power, the profits to go to the support of the school. The mill was built, but sometimes the creek overflowed, sometimes it went dry, and profits accruing to the school were small indeed.

Attendance varied considerably. During the first year at East Union there were 68 students, which was more than Augustana had at Paxton. Again in 1864-65 enrollment reached 68, with as many as 60 in attendance at one time. From that time the number of students varied greatly and never reached the high peak of the first two years. Gradually it was becoming apparent that the location of the school was not satisfactory and that a change of location would have to be considered before the Conference was asked for a larger measure of support.

From the very beginning of the school project the Minnesota Conference was faced with the fact that they had two institutions to support, while Illinois and the other congregations had only one. Augustana at Paxton was the synodical institution and Minnesota could not entirely shirk responsibility for its support, but a letter from Norelius to Hasselquist reveals what happened when the two came into direct competition. Norelius sent \$20.00 for the school in Paxton, with this alibi:

"I certainly would have sent more for the salary of the professor out of the funds gathered for benevolences at the home catechetical meetings (*husförhör*) in Vasa before Christmas, but Brother Jackson, who was here at Christmas and preached for me at Vasa, convinced me that the Carver school was in greater need and took the lion's share of what I had gathered. He got \$30 from Vasa and \$10 from Red Wing for the school, besides a collection of \$41 in Vasa for himself. But I hope no damage is done, and that our congregations down there do so much more for the professor's salary. Something for the needy students was sent from Red Wing before Christmas and some more may come later on. This at least shows that we want to do a little for the Seminary in Paxton, though we will have to carry the heavy end with the Carver school."¹¹

The Synod never appropriated any money directly for the school in Carver. Jackson received \$100 the first year for part time work as home missionary, and \$50 the second year. After that all such support ceased.¹²

That Norelius was not pleased with the location of the school at East Union is evident from remarks made to Hasselquist in the letter quoted above. He very pointedly wrote: "It was a great mistake that the school was located there; the people there are really too stolid to appreciate it. In the big Carver settlement there are only a dozen who attend the school. If it had been here I am certain there would have been students enough to support the school."

By heroic efforts and great sacrifices on the part of Jackson, and faithful co-operation on the part of Peter Carlson and others, the school was maintained, but in general the interest in the Conference churches was half-hearted. In 1870 the Conference was asked to contribute at the rate of ten cents per communicant member, but it was left to the decision of the individual congregations whether they would fulfill this duty or not. The result was not encouraging.

Jackson resigned in 1872, the tenth anniversary of the school. In connection with his resignation he gave a summarized report of what the school had accomplished for the church. Of those who had been enrolled in the school, 32 devoted themselves to the work of the church, six as ordained pastors, four were continuing their education at Augustana in Paxton, eleven were serving the Church in various ways, and eleven had just been graduated. Humbly Jackson remarked that "the results of our ten years of activity seem very small and insignificant; but let us not forget that these years have been the years of infancy and of foundation work for our school and at the same time let us not overlook the many unfavorable conditions and circumstances under which we have labored, and then we will have occasion to thank the Lord for what has been accomplished and to look forward with the hope that the next ten years will show a more satisfactory result."¹³

The resignation of Jackson was accepted and he was given the right to move to West Union, of which congregation he was pastor, but he was asked to continue serving the institution part time and to retain the title of principal. Mr. J. J. Frodeen was employed to take over the main part of the teaching load.

The future of the school hung in the balance. There was no intention of abandoning the project, but the great question was, How can it be financed? The fall Conference meeting, held in Red Wing September 13-17, took a step which led to the removal

of the institution from Carver. Following a discussion of matters pertaining to the school, a committee was elected to prepare a plan for gathering an endowment fund. Norelius headed this committee, the other members being J. O. Cavallin, pastor at Spring Garden, near Cannon Falls; J. G. Lagerstrom, pastor at Mooers Prairie, Wright County; H. Olson, layman from Red Wing and John H. Magny, layman from Chisago Lake.

This committee found itself involved in situations far beyond the scope of the resolution adopted by the Conference. One was the question of moving the school to a new location that would be more acceptable to a majority of the members of the Conference. Another was the old thorny question of the relationship with Augustana and the brethren in Illinois, as well as the Synod in general. A third situation, which aroused some rays of hope, was the growth of Minneapolis as a city and the increasing number of Swedes who settled there, indicating that Minneapolis might be the strategic place for a Lutheran school.

Rumors of these pending difficulties began to fly around long before any official report was presented by the committee. Norelius wrote to Jonas Auslund, pastor in St. Paul, that he had had a special meeting of his congregation to discuss the question of moving the school to St. Anthony.¹⁴

The news was broached to Peter Carlson soon afterwards, and it was hardly to be expected that it would please him. He replied, "In your last letter you say that you intend at the next Conference to bring up the question of moving the St. Ansgar school. Your reasons for this I have not heard, so I will not say anything. But it seems to me that this is not the place to do it, [The next Conference meeting was scheduled to be held in East Union] for it would take away from the congregation, yes, the congregations here, the encouragement, I had almost said the blessing of the preaching of the Word at this meeting. For my part I can listen to something else than my thoughts, but it is not so with everybody. But I think that, for my part, I would want to have something both for my eyes and ears before I agree to this, namely, moving the school; for there is much that can flare up but on closer consideration it may be only air bubbles. What the Lord's will is we will see in the future, but when we are in uncertainty as to the synodical situation it is the wrong time, and if our Seminary is to be moved then our strength must be concentrated there."¹⁵

The "synodical situation" and the question of moving the Seminary, referred to by Carlson in his letter to Norelius, had reference to the discussions about a new location for Augustana.

Hasselquist had written to Norelius in December that a board meeting was to be held on the 27th "to make plans for the new college." Jonas Swensson at Andover had given his opinion that in time the college will have to be moved, and they "are thinking of a bluff between Moline and Rock Island."¹⁶ In January A. R. Cervin of Paxton and John Johnson both reported to Norelius that the committee had decided to buy 20 acres at the contemplated site. "The land is elevated, a beautiful and healthful site." Lots would be offered for sale at \$500 each, \$100 down and \$100 a year. Subscriptions would have to total \$2,000, with \$500 paid before the deal is closed. Already the subscriptions totalled \$1,500.¹⁷

These developments in Illinois did not deter Norelius from proceeding with plans for a college in Minnesota. His report to the Conference at East Union, February 5-10, 1873, outlined his plan in detail.

"Unless a school is built and maintained in every state where a considerable number of Swedish countrymen have settled, the young people will seek their education in the public institutions and the Church will miss the opportunity of training them for the Church and for the kingdom of God. One college in our widely scattered Synod will not be enough for this purpose.

"The time may not be far distant when the Minnesota Conference will become an independent synod. If we now put forth all our efforts to endow Augustana College in Rock Island and then we become a separate synod soon we could not expect to get any of our money returned, because this would ruin Augustana College. It is also obvious that if we now endow Augustana College it will be useless to come immediately with an attempt to do something for the St. Ansgar school."

The committee suggested that each conference or a group of conferences support their own institutions of learning, but that the Synod have one seminary for the training of pastors. The committee therefore proposed that the Conference request the Board of Augustana College and Theological Seminary to delay sending a solicitor to the Minnesota Conference until the question of our schools could be discussed at the next Synod.

To create an endowment for St. Ansgar's school would re-

quire at least \$10,000, and this would not be impossible if we could arouse the interest of our congregations. The committee had found that the lack of interest at the time was due very largely to dissatisfaction with the location. The committee therefore urged the Conference to consider seriously the question of moving the school. The committee had made some investigations along this line. The state had established its university in East Minneapolis, and it appeared to the committee that St. Ansgar's could be established near the university. St. Ansgar's could give our students the preparatory courses needed for entrance to the university, and also instruction in Christianity and in Swedish. The committee had found that several influential people had shown a great interest in having St. Ansgar's school moved to Minneapolis and will help to find a site and to provide funds for the erection of a school building.

The committee therefore proposed that the Conference move the school to Minneapolis and that a committee be elected to work with the Board in collecting funds for the school in Minneapolis. The committee was elected, consisting of Pastor C. A. Evald, Mr. Aug. Johnson, and Mr. C. G. Vanstrum.¹⁸

The committee reported at the May meeting that Mr. Pillsbury, Dr. S. A. Chute and R. Chute had promised to donate an entire city block adjacent to the university. The block was worth \$4,000 but the owner would sell it for \$2,000, and the above-mentioned men have promised to pay this. They would have paid \$200 as down payment at once, if the committee had had authority to accept the deed. There were also good prospects of donations for a building program.

The Conference voted to accept the offer, and to establish "Gustavus Adolphus Literary and Theological Institute" in Minneapolis. A new board of directors was elected, consisting of Norelius and J. W. Anderson for three years; Rev. J. Auslund and Johan Johanson of St. Paul for two years, and C. A. Evald of Minneapolis and Håkan Olson of Red Wing for one year.¹⁹

In the meantime pleas and warnings had come from Illinois. A. R. Cervin in Paxton wrote that though he did not think there was anything wrong about the plan to establish a school in Minnesota, they must count the cost. The synod has a hard time supporting the one they have and to get teachers for it.²⁰

Professor H. Reck in Paxton expressed himself in favor of

continuing St. Ansgar's as an academy with a three-year course and a business department.

"1. Because one college—centrally located—is all the Augustana Synod can build up in the next five years.

"2. The Synod informally approved Rock Island as the location, and to divide our counsels will hinder the plans.

"3. The Synod does not have need for more than one college for years to come, and that one should be central, have a good building and an endowment.

"4. Rock Island is as accessible to a large portion of Minnesota as to eastern Illinois. At the opening and closing of the school year the river will afford a cheap and pleasant way to travel."

Reck further advised against any sort of connection with the university in Minneapolis, since the state schools have no positive Christian character, and it is not good for the Swedes to mingle with German and Irish youth.²¹

Hasselquist of course was opposed to the school, but he gave Norelius credit for being sincere. "It hurts me if someone or several have written hard words to you about your plans. I have always wished to work together so that something in some place could be done *well*, and that we do not scatter our strength. But I have nevertheless always recognized the sincerity of your efforts, even the necessity of them. You have been along almost, or altogether from the beginning and can do nothing but live for the whole. It may be different with one or another who has entered the work later."²²

The hopes of Norelius to build a school in Minneapolis soon began to fade. Jonas Auslund wrote to him in July: "I have thought about the school question but in truth I do not know what to say under the circumstances and as to what is to be done. The prospects in Minneapolis are not so good, because when these big fellows do not see any personal gain in a Swedish school there, then they do not care much about it."²³

At the Conference meeting in October Norelius was forced to report that the financial panic and other unforeseen obstacles had made it impossible to carry out the contemplated project in Minneapolis.²⁴

Later in the fall Norelius asked Jackson to give him a report on how much the Conference had contributed to St. Ansgar's school since it was moved to East Union. Jackson replied that he could not state to the penny how much the congregations of

the Conference had contributed, but it was approximately \$5,850.00 for building purposes, teachers' salary, and other support. The school had received the mill at the end of 1867 or in the beginning of 1868. When the mill was completed it cost about \$5,000. That was in the fall of 1868. From that time until the fall of 1871 this debt was decreased to about \$1,000. In November of 1871 a steam engine was installed whereby the mill debt increased to \$6,200. The mill debt has since then been reduced to \$5,374.72. The schoolhouse and teacher's residence together cost about \$2,743. The school debt is about \$300, part for teachers' salaries, part for repairs and maintenance.²⁵

The school stayed at Carver until 1876, and then it was moved not to Minneapolis, but to St. Peter. The story of how this came about belongs in a later chapter.

NOTES

¹Victor E. Lawson, *History of Kandiyohi County*, 21ff.; summarized in *The Beginnings and Progress of Minnesota Conference*, 158ff.

²*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Jan. 15, 1863 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 173f.

³A. Jackson to Norelius, May 13, 1863 (MS).

⁴The letter was written from Mayville, probably Mayville, Wisconsin, while Jackson was travelling in the interests of the Church.

⁵*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 18, 1863 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 176.

⁶*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1863, 27; *Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 6-9, 1867. in *Tidskrift* 1899, 219; May 18-26, 1871, Mimeo ed., 34.

⁷*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 23-28, 1863 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 179.

⁸C. A. Hedengran to Norelius, Aug. 4, 1862 (MS).

⁹Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Apr. 7, 1863 (MS).

¹⁰*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, 1863 and 1864 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 176ff.; Peterson, *Remember Thy Past*, 13ff.

¹¹Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Jan. 16, 1865 (MS).

¹²Peterson, *Remember Thy Past*, 16.

¹³*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 5-8, 1872, Mimeo ed., 52.

¹⁴Norelius to J. Auslund, Dec. 2, 1872 (MS).

¹⁵Peter Carlson to Norelius, Jan. 8, 1873 (MS).

¹⁶Jonas Swensson to Norelius, Dec. 17, 1872 (MS).

¹⁷A. R. Cervin to Norelius, Jan. 11, 1873; John Johnson to Norelius, Jan. 18, 1873 (MSS).

¹⁸*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 5-10, 1873, Mimeo ed., 66ff.

¹⁹*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, May 21-26, 1873, Mimeo ed., 72, 74.

²⁰A. R. Cervin to Norelius, Apr. 30, 1873 (MS).

²¹H. Reck to Norelius, May 3, 1873 (MS).

²²T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, June 4, 1873 (MS).

²³Jonas Auslund to Norelius, July 28, 1873 (MS).

²⁴*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 1-6, 1873, Mimeo ed., 79.

²⁵A. Jackson to Norelius, Nov. 20, 1873 (MS).

Chapter 19

A FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS

DURING the first two hundred years of Lutheranism in the United States the Church was too loosely organized and too preoccupied with the elemental home mission problems to begin thinking about starting any charitable institutions. Not until in 1849 was there a Lutheran hospital in America. The first such institution was founded in Pittsburgh with Dr. W. A. Passavant as the leader of the project. The inspiration for this movement had come from Pastor Theodor Fliedner of Kaiserswerth, Germany.

Soon after the beginning of the hospital in Pittsburgh Passavant established an orphanage in the same city, but this was later transferred to Zelienople and Rochester, Pennsylvania. Passavant also brought Lutheran deaconesses from Kaiserswerth to America, thus introducing this form of Christian service.¹

Eric Norelius, being an avid reader of Lutheran church papers from the time of his student days in Columbus, was familiar with the story of these beginnings of Lutheran eleemosynary work. When he became personally acquainted with Passavant, at the time the great leader visited the Norelius' in their pioneer log cabin home at Vasa in the summer of 1856, there was opportunity to ask questions and to hear the direct testimony of the man whose heart was aflame with zeal for the cause. Something of the same spirit was kindled in the heart of Norelius and he cherished the hope that he might some day start an orphan home in Minnesota.

As already mentioned, an unexpected opportunity to serve the unfortunate came in August, 1862, when several hundred white settlers in western Minnesota were killed by the Sioux Indians and refugees fled to the cities of eastern Minnesota. Norelius acted promptly to provide a place in Red Wing for several Lutheran refugees, and his published appeals brought over \$700.00 to aid the needy. This, however, was a temporary situation, and did not directly result in the establishment of an institution. Indirectly it provided the basis for a future orphan home.

At the meeting of the Minnesota Conference held at Spring Garden church, Goodhue county, February 3-7, 1864, the com-

mittee on aid to the needy reported that \$14 had been paid out since the last meeting, and that the balance on hand was \$104.89. The Conference voted that the committee continue its work until the next meeting. When the Conference held its next session at Carver on June 2, no report was given by the committee, which indicates that no more money had been expended. The Conference then decided that the committee on aid to the needy be discontinued, and that the money still in the treasury be kept for a future orphan home in Minnesota.²

The need and the opportunity for such an institution came in the fall of 1865. Erik Erson and his wife Anna with their five children, had arrived from Sweden in the summer, intending to settle in Minnesota. On arriving in St. Paul the father became ill and unable to care for his family. Johan Johanson, the tailor who had been the mainstay of the Swedish Lutheran congregation, active also in Conference activities, and who for several years had served as a sort of semi-official Swedish emigrant agent in St. Paul, now found himself in the position of trying to aid this unfortunate family. The mother was expecting soon to give birth to her sixth child, but on September 17 her youngest, two-year-old Kersti, died. Ten days later the sorrowing and distressed mother died after being delivered of a stillborn baby. Two days after the mother's death the father also died, leaving four surviving children, all young, without home, without money.³

The burden of serving as legal guardian of the children was laid on Johan Johanson. After the death of the parents he made announcement in the Swedish Methodist Church as well as in the Swedish Lutheran that an all-Scandinavian meeting would be held to consider the question of how to care for the orphaned children. At this meeting Johanson was asked to take the responsibility, and he was duly appointed by the legal authorities. There were, according to Johanson's report in *Hemlandet*, two boys, aged twelve and six, and two girls, aged ten and five. Though the parents were Baptists, they had had their three oldest children baptized.⁴

Johanson immediately arranged to have the two youngest children placed in an orphan asylum. Such an institution had been opened in St. Paul only a few days prior to the death of the Ersons. On May 12, 1865, a few ladies had met at the residence of Mrs. Charles M. Oakes to discuss the best method of caring for Protestant orphans. Eventually an organization was formed

and was incorporated on September 18, 1865 as the Protestant Orphan Asylum of St. Paul. A building at Marshall and Western Avenues was purchased by the organization and the institution was opened, the first orphan's home in Minnesota.⁵

Johanson then brought the two oldest children to the Conference school at East Union, since they had made a good beginning in reading. Appeals for funds to provide care for the children had been sent out through the church press.⁶

News of this family tragedy touched the heart of Eric Norelius, and it was not long until he decided that the time had come for him to establish a home for orphans. Without waiting for a Conference decision in the matter he came to St. Paul in October to confer with Johan Johanson, and it was agreed that Norelius should take the children. That he had experienced some doubt about the possibility of caring for them is evident from his report to the Conference at its next session in January, 1866:

"I hesitated a long time as to what I should do. What should I do with them? Where should I put them—how feed and clothe them? My lack of faith made many objections—all possible difficulties presented themselves before me. But again, when I thought of the little ones in need of care, and that it was neither Christian nor humane to let them come and go here and there in the world, I decided at last that I would, in the Lord's name, receive the children. Then, after I saw the faces of the children I had no further fear of accepting them; they spoke to the heart in an irresistible way."⁷

In the latter part of October Norelius brought the two young children to his home in Red Wing. The following Sunday he took them along to the worship service, which at that time was being held in a room in the court house, as the new church was under construction. He appealed to the congregation for aid, and touched by the sight of these young orphans the congregation immediately responded with an offering. Norelius then set about to find a suitable person to take care of the children and a place for them to live. He knew of a widow by the name of Brita Nilson, living in Stockholm, Wisconsin, where she was serving as teacher in the church school. He wrote to her asking if she would undertake the duty of being a mother to the children. After some hesitation she replied on November 1 that she was convinced that the Lord was thus calling her to an important service and she accepted the position offered her. The base-

ment of the Vasa church had a room that could be equipped to serve as a home for Brita and the little children. Thus the Vasa Children's Home became a reality, not as a Conference institution, but as the personal responsibility of Norelius.⁸

Norelius reported to the Conference at its next session, held in Götaholm, January 25-28, 1866. After stating the facts as to how the project had been begun, he said, "Without any previous planning this little institution has come into existence and the Lord has shown His favor, as far as can be ascertained. What shall we do with this which has come into being? Shall we break up the institution, send the children wherever they may go in this world and let the housemother go wherever she will? Or perhaps we should send the children to some orphan home down the country? The former we cannot do, for that would be to act contrary to God's Word and our conscience; and we have no indication that we should do the latter. I believe that neither one is necessary; for it seems that our congregations in Minnesota are willing and able to contribute to the support of a few homeless children.

"Furthermore it seems as if we may expect some other children in need of care, and it would be well to have a home for them. May the Lord do according to His own goodness and wisdom. I have wanted to lay this simple account of the matter before the Conference, not in order to bring about any legislation in regard to it, but only that I may hear the opinion of the Conference on this matter and that I may have an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions that have come for the support of the homeless children."

The report of contributions was then given by Norelius, but the list was not included in the minutes of the Conference. Resolutions were adopted expressing the joy of the Conference at the beginning made by Norelius, and recommending the project to the generosity of the congregations.⁹

According to the Conference resolution in 1864 designating the balance of the funds given for refugees in 1862 for a future orphans home, Norelius had \$100 to begin with. Even before his project was under way he had a promise of aid from Peter Carlson. A collection had been received in his parish for the Orphan's Home in Paxton, but Carlson had decided that if a home was soon to be established in Minnesota he would keep the money

for this purpose. Hedengran in Chisago Lake also pleaded with Norelius to start an orphan home, and promised financial aid.¹⁰

After a few months of operation Norelius sent a report to *Hemlandet* telling of the beginnings of the institution and accounting for funds received:

"During the school term they attended the church school and after school closed the oldest boy was placed with a farmer. The girl also has been out working between school terms. Without any particular difficulty we have so far received what we have needed to give them food and clothing. Many of the members of the congregation have provided the little household with flour, potatoes, meat, butter, eggs, milk, etc., and other little things as they have been able to, and this without my saying anything about it.

"The cash receipts thus far amount to \$295.99 and disbursements about \$140.00. Thus we have a little on hand which we intend to use for a building, if it does not become necessary to use it for daily bread. The household may become larger this fall, but we hope the income also will increase. Our plans for the future are very simple. We intend, if possible, to get a house which we can call the institution's own, and then we intend to accept all the destitute who really need a home. The matter is really in the hands of God.

"The following cash gifts have been received:

Collection in Vasa during the year 1863 for a home for the destitute	\$ 24.40
Collection in Vasa during 1864 at "husförhör" ...	24.85
The children's savings banks, same year, at "förhören"	7.83
Nov. 25, 1865, little John Swenson's savings bank, Chisago Lake	5.00
Nov. 26, collection at showing of Bible panorama in Red Wing	27.21
Mrs. Fristedt, Red Wing	1.00
Mrs. Anna Wenstrom, Red Wing	2.00
Samuel Johnson, Vasa	1.00
Dec. 21, By Pastor Beckman, collection, Thanksgiving Day, Spring Garden	5.00
Gustaf Johnson, Red Wing	1.00
By Pastor P. Carlson, East Union, collection from Sunday school children	14.62
Same, West Union	9.38
Collection, Thanksgiving Day, East Union	11.45
Collection, Thanksgiving Day, West Union	4.60

Collection, Götaholm	8.30
Johan Carlson's wedding	2.00
The wife of Carl Johan Samuelson, Red Wing15
Carl Carlson, Red Wing	1.00
By C. A. Hedengran, gathered in Chisago Lake ..	116.50
—in Taylors Falls	19.50
By Pastor P. Carlson, gathered by the children Anna, John, and Andreas Emanuel	8.20
<hr/> \$295.99" ¹¹	

From the above report it will be seen that as early as in 1863 Norelius had been gathering funds in Vasa for a children's home. That he had intended to start such an institution in the summer of 1865 is proved by a letter written by a Charles Lindman of Chisago Lake, on June 26, 1865 in which he regrets that he cannot grant Norelius' request to be in charge of the Orphans' Home at Vasa.

Thus, instead of a sudden inspiration in October, 1865, to start an orphans' home it is clear that Norelius was at work on the project for some time before the four Erson children became orphans. His plans for such an institution in Minnesota therefore began simultaneously with a decision by the Synod to establish a home in Illinois. In 1862 the Synod had voted to take up offerings for Dr. Passavant's "Orphan Home and Farm School." Dr. Passavant himself visited the Synod in 1863 and offered to establish and take charge of such an institution at Paxton, Illinois, if the Augustana congregations would raise enough money to buy 120 acres of land for the purpose. A committee was elected to get subscriptions and to buy land.

In 1864 the committee was able to report that it had gathered a total of \$1,829.50, and they were authorized to buy land. At the 1865 Synod they reported that 160 acres had been bought for \$3,500. The following year, 1866, an additional \$783.41 had been received, and a beginning had been made to get the land fenced in.

Another year passed by without definite action, and in 1867 the Synod voted that the land bought at Paxton for an orphan's home should be sold and the committee should seek a place near Andover or Swedona. In 1868 the committee reported that the Paxton farm had been sold, but that no land had yet been purchased anywhere else, though some good sites had been found.

The committee, however, had found it necessary to provide a

home for some children in need of care. An agreement had been made that a house be built on a vacant lot belonging to the Swedona congregation, and there, in March 1868, three orphan boys were received.¹²

The Vasa Children's Home thus was the first one in actual operation within the Augustana Synod, as well as being the first orphan home established by Lutherans in Minnesota.

It was not long before requests began to come to Norelius begging him to accept other children, and the orphan home household grew. The two oldest of the Erson children, who had stayed one at Peter Carlson's home, the other one at Andrew Jackson's, while attending school at East Union, were brought to Vasa early in 1866. In February, 1867 Rev. John Pehrson of Scandian Grove wrote that N. Liljequist, who is guardian for nine-year-old Christina Göranson, would like to send her to Vasa. In April, the same year, Rev. Beckman at Spring Garden wrote that he had promised Anders Olson, whose wife had died last fall, that he would try to get his children into the Orphans' Home at Vasa.

To accommodate a larger household Norelius bought ten acres of land near the Vasa Church for \$150, and a small, unpretentious building was erected. The burden of caring for the children was becoming too heavy for "Auntie Brita," and Norelius found it necessary to look for another matron. He learned of a woman at Chisago Lake, Carolina Magny, recommended by Pastor C. A. Hedengran as "a good Christian woman who oftentimes takes care of the sick."¹³

Miss Magny, married a few years later to M. J. Strandberg, remained at the Home until 1880. By that time it had become a Conference institution. From time to time Norelius had reported briefly to the Conference, and in 1875 he offered to turn over the institution to the Conference. At the meeting held in Duluth September 22-25, 1875 he reported that during the eleven years of operation the average number of children had been ten. Some had come at a very early age. Only a few had been above six years old when they came. The time of their stay had varied. A few had been confirmed. Cash receipts had been \$2,861.95. Various gifts had also been received, farm products mostly from the Vasa congregation, clothing from several places. The institution had not been in debt. Miss Magny had not asked for any annual salary, but only food and clothing, and some occasional remuneration which she had very reluctantly accepted.

No attempt had been made to set the children apart as different from others. They had been given the kind of care ordinarily given in a Christian home.

His desire to turn over the Home to the Conference was based on the fact that experience had taught him the difficulty of caring for the children above ten years of age in such an institution. The boys needed a man who could supervise them and give them work. To send them out to work occasionally on farms in the neighborhood and then bring them back to the institution was impossible, for the matron could not maintain proper discipline over them under such circumstances. To operate a children's home successfully it would be best to have a farm, with a suitable man in charge of it. A committee of two pastors and two laymen was elected to discuss the matter with Norelius.

The committee recommended that the Conference take over the Orphans' Home, and a proposed constitution was presented and adopted. It provided for a board consisting of three members to govern the institution, and a committee of seven who were to visit the institution once a year, to inspect the physical, moral, and financial situation and report to the Conference. Norelius was elected chairman of the new board, Rev. J. O. Cavallin, treasurer, and Mr. John W. Petterson, secretary.¹⁴

The first report of the Orphans' Home Board, presented to the Conference in February, 1877, reveals the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Strandberg were in charge, under an arrangement whereby his 40 acre farm was being operated for the benefit of the institution, thus providing work for the boys when they were not in school, and Mr. Strandberg had an annual allowance of \$400 as salary and rent. The report also mentioned that one boy who had been at the home since its beginning had been confirmed. This was undoubtedly the youngest of the four Erson children.¹⁵

In the reports given by Norelius concerning finances and operation of the Home there is no mention made of the \$104.89 that had been contributed for the refugees of the Indian massacre in St. Paul but not used for this purpose and designated instead for an orphans' home. Johan Johanson, the Conference treasurer, was treasurer also of the committee on aid for refugees, but his reports do not show what was done with this money.

After the minutes of February 3-7, 1864 no further reference is found to this fund in the official records of the Conference.

Since Norelius in 1867 was able to buy ten acres of land for the Home at a cost of \$150 it seems possible that this may be the explanation of the disposition of the funds that had been set aside for an orphan home, though there is no mention of it in the official minutes or in the writings of Norelius.

No one could have managed the institution more economically than Norelius did during the eleven years when it was his personal responsibility. It was truly "en älsklingsanstalt," a home dear to his heart, and he gave much time, effort, and love to the furtherance of the project.

NOTES

¹A. R. Wentz, *The Lutheran Church in American History*, 172.

²*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 3-7, 1864, and June 2, 1864 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 182, 187.

³*Hemlandet*, Oct. 11, 1865; Norelius, in his history of Vasa Children's Home in *Vasa Illustrata*, gives the full name of the father as Mikola Erik Erikson.

⁴*Hemlandet*, Oct. 18, 1865. The report in *Hemlandet*, written by Johanson, does not fully correspond with Norelius' reports published the following year. In his report to the Conference in January, 1866, Norelius stated that the two youngest were boys, six and four years of age. In an article in *Hemlandet*, Oct. 2, 1866, he stated that there were three boys and one girl, ranging in age from twelve to four. It seems most probable that Norelius' reports are correct, and that Johanson was in too much haste when he sent his first report to *Hemlandet*, possibly having on his mind the little girl who had died and confused therefore about the identity of the youngest surviving child.

⁵Information given by Minnesota Historical Society, from history of the Protestant Orphan Asylum in the quarter-century report published in 1890. The first officers of the organization were Mrs. Walter Webb, president; Mrs. S. Y. McMasters, vice president; Mrs. John Mattocks, treasurer; and Miss M. D. Postlethwaite, secretary. The first managers were Mrs. John Nicols, Mrs. William Banning, Mrs. J. H. Stewart, Mrs. W. W. Singleton, Mrs. E. F. Drake, Mrs. Horace Thompson, Mrs. Charles M. Oakes, and Mrs. E. R. Hollinshead. In 1885 a new building was erected at Marshall and St. Albans and this was the home of the Protestant Orphan Asylum until it went out of existence under that name. In 1935 it became a part of Children's Service of St. Paul.

⁶*Hemlandet*, Oct. 18, 1865; Peter Carlson to Eric Norelius, Oct. 26, 1865.

⁷*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Jan. 25-28, 1866 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 205.

⁸Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 246f.

⁹*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Jan. 25-28, 1866 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 205f.

¹⁰Peter Carlson to Norelius, Oct. 26, 1865 (MS); C. A. Hedengran to Norelius, Sept. 15, 1864 (MS).

¹¹*Hemlandet*, Oct. 2, 1866.

¹²L. A. Johnston, *Minnesskrift, Augustana-Synodens Femtioårsjubileum*, 258ff.

¹³Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 248; C. A. Hedengran to Norelius, July 10, 1867 (MS).

¹⁴*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 16-19, 1876, Mimeo ed., 118f.

¹⁵*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 7-10, 1877, Mimeo ed., 122, 124.

Chapter 20

PASTOR AND CHURCH BUILDER

NORELIUS' second pastorate in the Vasa-Red Wing parish was from September, 1861 until the end of 1867. During these years he and his family lived in Red Wing, at first in rented quarters, then in a house of their own on Pine Street.

When they came to Red Wing they had two sons, three-year-old Theodore Emanuel, and baby Anton Elfving, born in St. Paul a month before they moved. The death of Norelius' mother in 1863 and the death of little Anton at the age of two years and nine months in April, 1864 brought sadness to the home. A year later, April 9, 1865 another son was born and was given the name Leonard Chemnitz.¹

Mrs. Norelius was often in poor health during these years in Red Wing and Norelius himself seems to have had frequent illness, especially in the latter years of this period. In spite of these many frailties and domestic worries he labored incessantly, not only with the establishment of institutions, writing for the church papers, serving on boards and committees, carrying on an increasing correspondence, but always and chiefly working as the shepherd of his flock. The Vasa congregation had 134 communicant members at the beginning of 1862, Red Wing 108. Three years later Vasa had grown to a membership of 314. Red Wing had gained only slightly, having 121 members in 1865. By 1867 Vasa had 346 and Red Wing 171.²

Norelius was not one to be content with the mere addition of more names to the church register. He knew that building a Christian congregation must include thorough training and indoctrination of the members in the Christian faith, and that this was a daily task which required not only the service of the pastor himself but also of teachers employed by the congregation. Church school had been taught at Vasa during Norelius' first pastorate, 1856-1858, by his cousin, Jonas Engberg. In 1862, 1863, and 1864 Miss Lovisa Peterson, who later married Rev. Andrew Jackson, was the teacher. The congregation has continued the practice of such church schools throughout its history, sometimes with men,

sometimes women, as teachers, some of these also serving as teachers in the public schools of the community.³

The old Swedish custom of *husförhör* was practiced for several years by Norelius. The word may be translated "home catechetical meetings." In the various district of the congregation the neighbors gathered at one of the homes, and the pastor came to test them on their knowledge of the Catechism.

These and other similar meetings became golden opportunities for Norelius to exercise pastoral care and guidance, and to teach the people themselves how to lead prayer meetings. He had written about these things to Hasselquist, who was pleased to hear of the good work, but asked, "Are you becoming a real 'revival preacher'?"⁴

Norelius replied: "I have not become a 'revival preacher,' although I have prayer meetings and encourage them; that is, I am not that kind of preacher in an unfavorable sense. On the contrary, my way of procedure may be considered too churchly by some, since I very carefully follow the ritual of our church, and I cannot deny that in the outward appearance, garb, etc., I like to be somewhat ministerial, as far as I can understand it.

"I also become more and more convinced that the form, though it is not and never can be essential, still is of no little importance for religion. At the prayer meetings in Vasa everything is generally very orderly. I have urged people to have such meetings and taught them how they should be conducted, and I have attended as often as possible and have tried to guide as well as I could where there was anything that was not just right. The usual order at these meetings has been that the man of the house where the meeting is held has led the devotions for the evening or the occasion. Some chapters of the Bible have then been read, or some portion from a book by Luther, Johan Arndt, etc., then there has been conversation about what was read, and some songs or psalms are sung, then prayers have been offered, sometimes by several, sometimes by a few, according to how they have desired. All has been done freely and without compulsion. A few times there have been some rather heated discussions about some question, but then there has been better understanding again. At any rate, I believe, as you do, that such prayer meetings are entirely churchly."

In the letter just quoted Norelius also reports that "the Sunday school is doing quite well [in Red Wing] and H. Olson

as superintendent takes great interest in it. I have also taken it upon myself to have week-day school together with Lovisa Petersen. I began in the latter part of January and will continue three months. Have school five days a week and have about 50 children, among whom there are about 20 who will be confirmed.”⁵

A Women’s Missionary Society, which undoubtedly was one of the first groups of its kind organized in any Swedish Lutheran church in America, was begun in Red Wing in 1861. At the annual meeting of this organization held on the first Wednesday in January, 1863, Norelius reported as follows:

“In its beginning this society is like the grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all herbs. A few Christian women began more than a year and a half ago to consider how they could do something for our needy students and for other purposes, and they decided that they wanted to begin by contributing ten cents a month for this purpose, and they hoped that the Lord, who does not despise the widow’s mite, would bless these small gifts, and increase the number of those who would give each month. Their hopes were not put to shame, the participants have increased so now the number sometimes exceeds thirty, and the total amount gathered since the beginning is not far from \$50. Since I have received the money and had charge of the treasury only half a year I cannot report definitely how much was gathered before that time. Since the first of July the society has met the first Wednesday evening of each month in the church, when mission study and prayer has been conducted by the undersigned, and the monthly contributions of ten cents have been given. The income since July 1 has been \$22.57. Of this \$20.00 has been paid out, \$10.00 to needy students in Chicago, and \$10.00 to the salary of the professor, which already has been acknowledged in *Hemlandet*. I have bought an account book for the society for 40 cents. There is a balance of \$2.17 in the treasury now.”⁶

The people of the Vasa community were undoubtedly much like the average of the Swedish immigrants of the time. They came to this country chiefly to better their economic circumstances, and for this cause most of them were willing to work hard. Practically all were from the rural sections of Sweden and were accustomed to hard work.

Hans Mattson, the first Swede to settle in Vasa township, was also one of the first to leave. He opened a store in Red Wing in 1856, later studied law, served with distinction in the Civil

War and rose to the rank of colonel. He later held the position of Secretary of State of Minnesota, and American consul in India. He engaged in real estate business and newspaper enterprises. Though counted as one of the charter members of the church at Vasa, he had no further connection with it after 1856.

Mattson's brother-in-law, S. J. Willard, moved to Red Wing in 1862, and served as county auditor for twelve years. After the death of his first wife he married an American woman and from that time had little contact with the Swedes.

Carl Carlson, in whose home the congregation had been organized on September 3, 1855, had been a minor parish and forestry official in Sweden. He remained in the Vasa community though not on his original farm.

Many others of the charter members moved away, but other immigrants arrived to take their places in the community and in the church. There were enterprising and intelligent men and women who were not slow to adopt the best methods of farming known at that time. In place of the rude log cabin homes of the 1850's the community was soon dotted with large well-built homes. In general people from various provinces of Sweden settled together, and the districts of the Vasa congregation came to be known by such names as Skåne, Småland, Westerbotten, Götha, Jemtland, and Norrbotten.⁷

Norelius was often seriously concerned as to whether he was doing the right thing in trying to build a congregation out of all the material that was available in the community. He told his problems to the synodical president, Hasselquist, and Hasselquist gave him this advice:

"The question whether it is best to dissolve the present congregational organization and build a new one of the most earnest members is one that for the last eight or nine years has occupied my mind a great deal. The many spiritually dead members seem to be too heavy a load to handle. However, nothing came of it, the Lord knows if it was not for the best.

"At times the condition of a church may seem to be flourishing, and one could then wish to have a congregation of only those who seemed to be the objects of God's saving grace. That would be so good and so joyful. But soon this everyday life might be such that one would begin to wonder if one might be mistaken about them, then a new picked list, and so it would go all the time, I fear. I would not therefore say that anyone at all can be

received as a member of the congregation. But I believe that we Swedes have a double reason for being patient in this matter: (1) because our countrymen have been members of the Church at home and would become worse if they were rejected; (2) because in general they are better spiritual building material than one ordinarily finds in this country, in spite of the fact that they were born within a State church and reared under her supervision. In this connection I think also of the net in which *all kinds* of fishes, both good and bad, were gathered, and the servant who gathered as many as he could find for the marriage feast. We also preach, not that we declare our church members Christians, but that the Lord makes them such. However, I believe there could be more *fellowship* among the true Christians, both to strengthen them and to let those outside know the difference, although this too has its dangers.”⁸

As to the particular type of piety which characterized Norelius, he has been classed by some as a “Hedbergian,” and he himself was willing to acknowledge this, though with some reservations. F. G. Hedberg was a Lutheran pastor in Finland who had a great influence in his own country and in Sweden in the middle of the 19th century. According to the varying viewpoints of his friends and his opponents, his teachings have been called “the bright truth of the gospel” and “antinomianism.” The “Free Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland” of today counts its origin at least in part from Hedberg, as is indicated in one of the publications emanating from this group: “In spite of the fact that Lutheran elementary instruction was given by the [State] Church [of Finland], the light of the pure doctrine became so beclouded that, for instance, in the 1830’s there was no one in the clergy who could have preached the true gospel. Gradually, however, the bright truth of the gospel—especially through Luther’s works—was revealed to Pastor F. G. Hedberg.”⁹

A Swedish contemporary of Hedberg, writing to Esbjörn in Illinois, had an entirely different attitude: “Erik Jansonism was succeeded by Hedbergianism, which has come forth in a more refined and more dangerous way, with Luther’s name on its shield, though not in its fullness but only in part, so that the truths of the Second Article are accepted but the Third is largely rejected, especially in the matter of how one comes to faith, wherefore there arises a gospel without law, faith without repentance.”¹⁰

C. O. Rosenius, the great lay evangelist of Sweden, whose in-

fluence reached deeply into the Swedish Lutheran churches and homes also in America, was a friend of Hedberg, but did not entirely approve of his "new evangelism" which some characterized as hyperevangelism.¹¹

Norelius himself has told the story of how he was deeply influenced by one of Hedberg's writings in his early youth:

"Up to this time [1848] my parents and I had been seeking salvation by works, not by grace. Some of the books we had read were thoroughly legalistic and others did not rightly divide the Word of truth, but rather confused law and gospel. The result of using such spiritual food could not be anything but bondage under the law. We could not understand the significance of Christ's atoning work in any other way than this, that when we prayed earnestly to Him He would give us strength to fulfill the law and thereby become righteous in the sight of God.

"In the summer of 1848 we happened to get a book entitled 'A Refutation of the Doctrine of Works and a Defense of the Gospel,' Volume I, by Fr. G. Hedberg. Hedberg was a minister in Finland. He had tried, in much the same way as we, to find peace with God and to gain the forgiveness of sins by means of his own good works, but he had failed to reach his goal. The Holy Spirit had finally opened the eyes of his soul and by means of the gospel light enabled him to see the crucified Saviour and the true meaning of the Atonement. He then began to preach and teach according to the new light which he had received.

"Hedberg was in the main correct, but probably he went too far in his criticism of our pietistical writers. He might also be criticized for stirring up separatistic movements in the State Church. These movements were not always of a healthy nature, but rather tended toward sectarianism, and the reason for this was that people in general, both the so-called 'läsare' (literally, readers; denoting a type of pietists) and others had very hazy notions in regard to the Church of Christ on earth. All in all, it was of great benefit to the Lutheran Church in Sweden when Hedberg and Rosenius turned the people's thoughts to the main doctrines of the Church so that people in general began to inquire into the contents of the Church's confessions."¹²

Norelius also expressed his opinion about Hedbergianism in a letter to his old confirmation pastor in Hassela, Sweden: "It was the fault of the Hedbergians that they did not have love enough to associate in a friendly way with those who held different

opinions. If they had had this they would have been good representatives of the true Lutheran confession."¹³

Norelius was a pietist in the sense that he believed every Christian, the layman as well as the pastor, should know Christ as his Saviour and Lord and be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him. At the same time he strongly emphasized Churchliness and disapproved sectarianism. His preaching was an orderly presentation of the truths of Scripture. The following sermon outlines may be given as illustrations:

Text: Romans 8:17.

Theme: The Believers' Sonship with God.

- 1) Their sonship presupposes a birth—a new birth.
- 2) It includes all the treasures that Christ owns—they are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
- 3) The condition for remaining in this sonship is suffering with Christ.
- 4) The comfort they receive from their sonship:
 - a) in severe afflictions when tempted by the devil;
 - b) in the feeling of their own unworthiness;
 - c) in discouragement and despair;
 - d) in suffering and anguish.¹⁴

A sermon delivered by Norelius at the Synod in Berlin [Sweden], Illinois in 1867 reveals something as to his conception of the Church:

Text: Revelation 1:20.

Theme: The Church of Christ on Earth.

I. What is the Church of Christ?

1. The word *ecclesia* tells us the Church is a group called out from this world by Christ, and is therefore a holy and divine institution.
2. The Church is seven golden candlesticks shining forth with the light of God's truth. The seven candlesticks indicates that the gifts are many. John saw them. They are to be manifest.

II. The Church's relationship to its Head.

1. The Lord is in the midst of the candlesticks. He is present in His Church.
2. He is present in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King.
3. Since He is present, there can be no mediator or vicar between Him and the Church.

III. The inner relation of the Church to itself.

1. There is no one who has human prerogatives. All are children of wrath. All, in order to be members of the Church, must be born anew.
2. In their gifts they are not alike. Some are called to be pastors.
3. While the members shine as lamps, the pastors are to shine as stars.
4. The pastor has his commission as long as he follows Christ's command to be an ambassador.
5. For unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the Word and the Sacraments.

Older members of the Vasa congregation still remember how they as children saw Norelius come and visit at their homes. It seems to have been customary for him to drive out to some home as early as ten o'clock in the forenoon and stay until five in the afternoon, spending hours with the family in conversation about the Church, about "old times," and sharing God's Word with them.

Letters written to sick people, members of his parish as well as more distant friends, were not merely sentimental get-well wishes, but an honest facing of the facts, with guidance for spiritual health.

People came to hear Norelius preach, and the churches both in Vasa and Red Wing soon became too small. The Vasa congregation increased in membership rapidly in the 1860's as new settlers arrived and every parcel of government land was taken up. In this period new churches were built both in Red Wing and in Vasa.

The spot chosen by Norelius and his committee for a church site in 1861, and approved by the congregation, was "beautiful for elevation," commanding an excellent view of the countryside in all directions, particularly toward the south. The first church was a frame structure without a steeple, serving its purpose for a time, but far from adequate even when it was built. The congregation soon began to think of a church that would be not only large enough but constructed in such a way as to be worthy of the place selected for it. In 1867 the project was begun. The first money paid out was for wood to be used for firing the brick kiln. The brick for the Vasa church came out of the soil of Vasa, only a few hundred yards from where the church was built. A total of 350,000 bricks were made, but were not all used

for the church, as the dimensions of the building were reduced from the original plan.¹⁵

When the building project was begun the congregation agreed with Norelius that he should have full charge, secure all materials, and supervise the work, as well as secure subscriptions to pay for it. However, before the year was out and before any actual construction had been begun, Norelius found it necessary to decline to serve, because of illness. In November he resigned from the congregation in Red Wing, and his resignation was reluctantly accepted. The Vasa congregation granted him a leave of absence, in the hope that his health might soon be restored.¹⁶

Erland Carlsson, when he heard that Norelius was free from his parish responsibilities wanted him to write for *Hemlandet*, collect debts and get new subscribers for the paper, and establish new agencies. Hasselquist had another job in mind for Norelius during the time of his convalescence. He asked him to go to New York and take charge of the newly organized Swedish Lutheran Church for a couple of months. There had been trouble in the congregation. Norelius went to New York but the congregation asked him to leave.¹⁷

In the hope of regaining his health, Norelius now decided to visit Sweden. When Esbjörn went to Sweden in 1862 to see about an appointment to a parish over there Norelius asked him to ascertain whether there might be a chance for him too. Esbjörn replied, "If I take a trip home then be assured that I will do all I can to help you get a place there; and that will not be so impossible, because now there is such a great lack of ministers."¹⁸

Esbjörn received appointment to Östervåla, where he had served his first pastorate, 1832-35, and moved to Sweden in 1863.¹⁹

But the plan to get Norelius into the service of the Church of Sweden did not materialize, and it is likely that Norelius never had any serious intentions to try for such a place. A visit to Sweden, however, was an attractive prospect, and the journey was made in 1868. He sailed on April 25 and was away until in the fall. He visited his old friend Esbjörn at Östervåla, and according to Esbjörn's biographer, Sam Rönnegård, this was the greatest happiness that Esbjörn experienced during his last pastorate in Sweden, next to the happiness that his own children brought him. "No one of the fellow-laborers in America was so near to him. To him he opened his heart freely and confidentially. The letters



Vasa Lutheran Church, built 1869, as it appeared in 1905. The church is still in use, the exterior largely unchanged.



First Lutheran Church, Red Wing, built 1864, used until 1895.



"Old Main" at Gustavus Adolphus College, in 1877.



First Vasa Children's Home, 1867.



Present Vasa Home near Red Wing, erected 1927.

to Norelius are the principal source of knowledge about Esbjörn's inner development. The relationship between these two reminds us of the relationship between Paul and Timothy, says C. M. Esbjörn. . . . It was a festive time for the two friends when in the summer of 1868 they were able to sit in the parsonage at Östervåla and converse intimately together. The one had completed his work, the other still had his real life work before him. And more than any other individual it was Norelius who was to continue the Esbjörn line in the Augustana Synod."²⁰

Norelius was not improved in health when he returned from Sweden, and therefore in January, 1869, he resigned. The congregation did not want to accept his resignation and asked him to wait and see if his health would improve. P. A. Cederstam had served as vice pastor during Norelius' absence and was still there. Norelius waited until April, but he was no better, and announced his intention to abide by his previous decision. The congregation now had no choice but to accept his resignation, and on April 18 a theological student, Gotthold Lagerstrom, soon to be ordained, was called.²¹

Norelius set out on a journey to Iowa and Nebraska to look for suitable land where he and his family might settle. He also wrote inquiries to California. He tried to sell his house in Red Wing but in this he was not successful. Lagerstrom declined the call to Vasa, and on July 4 the congregation once again issued a call to Norelius, with promise of a salary of \$1,000 per year plus offerings at Christmas and Easter. His reply to this call was a conditional acceptance:

He stated that his health was no better than it had been, and if he would accept the call it would have to be on the following terms:

1. The congregation will have to call and support an assistant to the pastor;
2. Norelius will have to have freedom to seek betterment of his health;
3. The congregation will be expected to maintain good order and discipline.²²

The congregation agreed to the conditions laid down by Norelius, and called a student, S. F. Westerdahl, to serve as his assistant for nine months.²³

That Norelius' illness was of a serious nature is indicated by occasional references to "lung trouble" and particularly a refer-

ence in a letter written by Passavant. He expressed his sorrow over hearing that Norelius had "bleeding at the lungs."²⁴

The church building project had proceeded slowly during the absence of Norelius. When first planned, the project was to be completed by the end of 1868, but only the foundation was actually built that year. In January, 1869, the congregation authorized the Board of Trustees to hire a man to supervise the construction of the church. The Board was also authorized to borrow \$4,000 for five years at 12 per cent interest. Four members of the congregation mortgaged their farms to secure this loan, and in turn they were given mortgages on the congregation's real estate. The four men were A. P. Johnson, Swen P. Peterson, Swen Olson, and P. O. Tilderquist.²⁵

The superstructure of the church was built in 1869, and a heating plant was installed. Winter set in before the interior finishing could be done, but this was accomplished the following year, and dedication took place on September 11, 1870 with Rev. Peter Carlson officiating.²⁶

In the history of the Vasa congregation (*Vasa Illustrata*) Norelius pays tribute to the generosity of the members. The total cost of the church when completed and equipped was \$31,065.22. Some families had given over \$400.00 each, many others had given \$300, \$200, or \$100. But Norelius omitted mention of his disappointment at the slow progress of the building project and the delay in contributing for it when it was under way. On one occasion he told his congregation that they seemed to think it was up to him to build the church. "When it is a question of building a store you can get hold of thousands of dollars and be ready to build in a few days. But when the congregation has a debt of \$1,600 you have no idea what to do about it."²⁷

The congregation accepted a scolding from their pastor now and then, and held him in high regard and affection. After he had resigned because of illness in the spring of 1869, and had no congregation to serve and hence no salary, the congregation took up the question of what could be done for Pastor Norelius' support, and it was the general opinion that although Pastor Norelius had not asked anything of the congregation it was nevertheless a duty to try to do something and it was therefore decided that the deacons in their respective districts take up a free will subscription for Pastor Norelius.²⁸

The Red Wing congregation had by this time secured its own pastor in the person of Rev. Peter Sjöblom, who, though in personality very different from Norelius, became a good friend and neighbor and for many years a co-laborer in the Church.

NOTES

¹Vasa Luth. Church Records, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives.

²*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, Statistical Reports, 1862, 1865, 1867.

³Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 242ff.

⁴T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Feb. 7, 1864 (MS).

⁵Norelius to T. N. Hasselquist, Feb. 29, 1864 (MS).

⁶Norelius, *Report at Women's Missionary Society in Red Wing* (MS).

⁷Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 190ff.

⁸T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Feb. 7, 1864 (MS).

⁹*The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Origination and Activity, 1923-1948*, 6. This group in Finland has a close relationship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in America.

¹⁰A. G. Sefstrom to L. P. Esbjörn, Apr. 29, 1853, published in Gunnar Westin, *Emigranterna och Kyrkan*, 67.

¹¹Gunnar Westin, *George Scott och Hans Verksamhet i Sverige*, 633.

¹²Norelius, *Early Life*, 51ff.

¹³Norelius to Herr Commminister J. Rolin, undated, but written at Red Wing (MS).

¹⁴(MS) in Gustavus Adolphus College Archives.

¹⁵*Vasa Ev. Luth. Ch. Protokoll*, Dec. 3, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives; *Kassörens Räkenskaper med Svenska Ev. Luth. Förs. i Vasa*, Goodhue Co., *Minn. från början av nya kyrko-byggnaden 1867*, 49.

¹⁶*Vasa Ev. Luth. Church Protokoll*, Dec. 3, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives; John Norquist and members of Church Board, Red Wing to Norelius, Nov. 25, 1867 (MS); Erland Carlsson to Norelius, Dec. 3, 1867 (MS).

¹⁷Erland Carlsson to Norelius, Dec. 3, 1867 (MS); T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Dec. 13, 1867; Erland Carlsson to Jonas Swensson, Jan. 7, 1868.

¹⁸L. P. Esbjörn to Norelius, Nov. 28, 1861 (MS).

¹⁹Sam Rönnegård, *Lars Paul Esbjörn*, 21ff.; 298ff.

²⁰Sam Rönnegård, *Lars Paul Esbjörn*, 300f.

²¹Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 217; *Vasa Luth. Church Protokoll*, Apr. 18, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives.

²²Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 217; *Vasa Luth. Church Protokoll*, July 4, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives; Norelius, *Reply to call issued by Vasa Cong.*, (MS) dated 7th Sun. after Trinity, 1869; Norelius to his wife Charlotte, Apr. 27 and May 3, 1869 (MSS); Isaac W. Atherton to Norelius, Jan. 26, 1869 (MS); Martin Hilliard to Norelius, Sept. 27, 1869 (MS).

²³Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 217.

²⁴W. A. Passavant to Norelius, Sept. 7, 1869 (MS). Norelius had had an attack of "lung trouble" in 1859, and had coughed up blood. The indications are that he had tuberculosis. This supposition is also strengthened by the fact that he had for a time been quite closely associated with J. P. C. Borén whose death was due to tuberculosis.

²⁵Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 216; *Vasa Luth. Church Protokoll*, Dec. 3, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives.

²⁶Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 217; *Vasa Luth. Church Protokoll*, Dec. 3, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Church Archives.

²⁷Norelius to Vasa Congregation, (MS) in Gustavus Adolphus College Archives.

²⁸*Vasa Luth. Church Protokoll*, June 2, 1869, (MS) in Vasa Luth. Church Archives.

Chapter 21

A CHURCH PRESS FOR MINNESOTA

DURING the time of his enforced idleness because of recurring lung trouble Norelius turned to writing. Since the days of his early youth this had been his favorite hobby, which later developed into a main activity and one of the principal means of serving the Church. His work as historian of the Augustana Synod had its beginnings in 1867, but the account of this work will be given in a later chapter.

His first newspaper, *Minnesota Posten*, had lasted less than a year. His tenure as editor of *Hemlandet* in Chicago was only nine months. He was a frequent contributor to *Hemlandet* and to other papers in the succeeding years, often writing news about the churches in Minnesota, or expressing his views on questions relating to the Church.

In 1869 he was contemplating the establishment of a new paper in Minnesota, and some of his fellow pastors in the Conference had long been urging him to do this. Knowing something of the difficulties involved in such a venture, and having a number of irons in the fire already, he made no attempt to start a paper until he had resigned from his congregations. Then his plans began to take shape but he was, as before, opposed by Hasselquist and Erland Carlsson in Illinois, who considered a paper in Minnesota not only as a rival to the Swedish Lutheran Publication Society paper, *Hemlandet*, but also as a step toward separation of the Minnesota Conference from the Synod.

The name of the proposed paper was to be *Skaffaren*, but the plans were changed. Norelius decided to publish a missionary paper, but this too was opposed by Hasselquist who feared that its purpose and program would be too similar to that of the Synod's devotional paper, *Det Rätta Hemlandet och Augustana*. Hasselquist definitely announced his opposition: "As to your suggestion to publish *Skaffaren* for both home and foreign missions I want to declare myself against it, because a new paper at a lower price (though twice as expensive as *Rätta Hemlandet* hitherto) would keep many from *R. H. och Augustana* through

which the congregations would little by little, learn to know many church matters that so far have been unknown. . . .”²

Two weeks later Hasselquist wrote to Norelius again, revealing a new move that had been made to thwart the plans for Norelius’ paper: “A missionary department is being added to *Rätta Hemlandet och Augustana*, and *Skaffaren* should not begin at the same time. Better wait until April. It is also best that the different papers do not all have subscriptions ending at the same time of the year.”³

Missionären, a monthly paper, sixteen pages per issue, 6 x 9 inches in size, began publication at *Hemlandet’s* office in Chicago in January, 1870. Norelius gave up his plans and became the editor of this paper. Its purpose was announced in the first issue by the editor:

“The mission news presented in the *Rätta Hemlandet* has been gladly received, and it was only to be regretted that there were not more items of the same kind. *Rätta Hemlandet*, however, has its particular purpose which should not be overlooked and to which it should devote itself. The opinion has therefore been expressed that it would be a service to the friends of missions to publish a separate paper for the cause of missions, not only for foreign missions, but also for home missions, which are of such great importance for us. This paper therefore wants to be a missionary partly to arouse and to lead a true missionary spirit and partly to bring information from all parts of the world about the progress of God’s kingdom, its struggles and its victories, especially that which happens on the mission fields of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Special attention will be given to what happens in our Synod’s congregations and what is being done for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God in the Swedish settlements in this country; and everything that pertains to home missions among us.”⁴

This program was followed during the four years that the paper was published. The first issue contained an article (unsigned, but evidently written by Norelius) on “our inner or home missions,” which consisted of an appeal to every church member to be a friend of missions. The writer urged the various conferences of the Augustana Synod to take care of the furtherance of mission work within their own boundaries, leaving the Synod to look after the missions outside the boundaries of the conferences.⁵

Missionären often published accounts of the travels by home missionaries in the Swedish settlements, giving first hand reports of the beginnings of Lutheran congregations in various places. Usually these reports were presented at Conference meetings but not incorporated into the minutes, and consequently the published reports in *Missionären* constitute the only available source material on some of the home mission history of the Augustana Church. The little paper proved to be popular in Minnesota, and the Conference at its meeting in Vista, May 18-20, 1871, voted to petition the Swedish Lutheran Publication Society for permission to assume ownership of the paper, beginning in 1872. This petition was denied and Norelius resigned as editor. J. P. Nyquist served as editor, 1872 and 1873, after which *Missionären* was merged with *Rätta Hemlandet och Augustana*.

As soon as it became known that the Minnesota Conference would not get *Missionären* there was a renewed chorus of appeals to Norelius to begin a new paper in Minnesota. Hedengran at Chisago Lake wrote: "You ask what I think about publishing a paper here in Minnesota, namely by you. I may admit that I have long desired publication of such a paper, and there seems to be good reasons for it:

"The Swedes in Minnesota need it.

"*Hemlandet* is not enough.

"If our Conference ever should feel that it doesn't need a guardian it will need an organ whereby the people can be informed why it withdrew from the Synod. . . . It would not be good for us to separate if it were not necessary and useful, but I fear that we already are separated, not in doctrine but in mind and in respect to distance, for the heavier bonds they lay upon us the sooner we will break loose, and the more they want to draw us south the farther north we go."⁶

Lagerstrom at Mooers Prairie also expressed himself in favor of a Swedish paper in Minnesota.⁷ Sjöblom in Red Wing was undoubtedly the one most eager to go ahead, and when the great Chicago fire in October destroyed the *Hemlandet* office he immediately wrote to Norelius: "Now is the time to start a paper in Minnesota, since *Hemlandet* certainly cannot come out soon. Only one thing I think of, is that those in Illinois would consider such a venture all too opportune. But it seems that they ought rather to see a paper in Minnesota than none at all, or an

infidel paper. But where get money this fall? Come down early next week so we can talk about it."⁸

Norelius knew what it would cost to start publishing a paper, and when Sjöblom received the information he was somewhat surprised, but believed it would be possible to get the money. However he was doubtful about the question of whether Norelius should give himself to the publishing of a political paper. Sjöblom wrote:

"That account for a paper makes the matter problematic. However, Cavallin was here last Tuesday night and he said that he would, at New Year's or sooner, put in \$500 cash, and he had more than half a promise of an equal sum from Thorson in Scandian Grove if he is elected Register of Deeds in Nicollet County. . . . Thorson is said to be very zealous for a paper with you as editor. The money problem evidently can be solved quite readily; but I have thought much lately about whether we can afford to put any efforts into politics. It is obvious that you would have to give most of your time and strength for the paper if it is to be a weekly, and you could devote very little time to your regular duties, and then one of our travelling missionaries would have to assist you. I don't know whether the publication of a political paper, for us as a church group, is as important as the pastoral work in a congregation such as Vasa, and the travelling missionary in the great West, and your other duties as Conference president and president of the Mission Board. You certainly are right that the *Monitor* is spoiling us Swedes; but the question is if we, if *you*, should go into this matter. I know you have had such thoughts the past summer, and now I write this to find how you have got away from those thoughts if you are rid of them."⁹

Discussions went on among pastors and laymen. One pastor, Andrew Jackson, voiced his objections to the project: "Now is certainly not the time for you to think of getting a paper started. *Hemlandet* surely needs all its subscribers."¹⁰

Meanwhile reports reached Minnesota that *Hemlandet* was not a total loss. Rev. Gustaf Peters in Rockford wrote that the Publication Society expected to get something on its accounts receivable and some for fire insurance, so "there will be something to begin with." He advised Norelius against starting a paper in Minnesota because it will only lead to strife between papers, "and then the people [will get] in one another's hair." Then

there would be "no monopoly but so much the more division and disagreement." And then the question, "Should a minister take on the job of publishing a political paper?" The problem of how the Publication Society can best serve the Church was also discussed by Peters: "If the Publication Society consisted only of delegates to Synod or if we elected the board of directors only from among them, and then had branches, or each Conference, when it feels able to, have the right to start a branch—that would be according to your desires. The Church could then be safeguarded from the abomination of desolation from that quarter and remain united. When once the conferences become synods it will be so. Until then we ought to work together."¹¹

Cavallin was at Vasa on November 13 for a personal conference with Norelius about the paper, and Sjöblom had been asked to come, but could not go. At this meeting it was decided that a paper should be started, but it was to be a church paper, not a political one. Norelius and Sjöblom were to work together on it, Norelius as editor, Sjöblom as proofreader.¹²

The name of the new paper was "Luthersk Kyrkotidning" (Lutheran Church Paper). Sjöblom had the first copies of the first issue just off the press when he went to the Conference meeting at Scandian Grove the first week of December. He admitted that he had not read proof as thoroughly as he should have done, and the paper was only half its intended size.¹³

Luthersk Kyrkotidning was similar in style and in program to *Missionären*. Lagerstrom was not satisfied, but still was of the opinion that they should have a "church political paper."¹⁴

Some of the pastors in Illinois were pleased with the new paper, but Hasselquist soon registered his objections, though diplomatically approving it:

"With regard to your paper, it certainly did come into being rather hastily and unexpectedly, and even I received some sharp letters in opposition to you and to it. But I rejoice over it and my recommendation of it was my sincere opinion."¹⁵

Norelius was beginning to improve in health. Though he was absent from the Conference in Scandian Grove because of poor health and the brethren passed resolutions of sympathy with him in his trials, he preached in Vasa that Sunday. Sjöblom expressed joy and surprise when he heard of it—"joy over your improvement, surprise over your recklessness, for which you ought to be punished. But I hope and pray that you will not be punished with

a new attack. Dear brother, be careful! You are not your own, you are the Lord's servant and must not shorten your life. May God strengthen, help, and uphold you; we cannot get along without you yet! If I hear that you do not keep away from preaching I shall follow Lindell's example and call a special meeting of Synod to have you suspended. Now be afraid and be good!"¹⁶

An incident that reveals something of the difference in personality of Sjöblom and Norelius occurred at this time. The Minnesota pastors wanted to have something to say about the affairs of *Hemlandet* and the Swedish Lutheran Publication Society in Chicago, and Norelius had formulated resolutions to be considered by the Conference. These were, in the first place, an expression of satisfaction with the zeal and care that the Board had shown in continuing publication of *Hemlandet* so soon after the fire, and in the same format as before; and secondly, that the Conference did not want the Board to enter into any new dealings or go into debt until there could be a meeting of the society, with representatives from Minnesota. These resolutions were adopted on Friday, December 8. The next day *Hemlandet's* latest issue arrived at Scandian Grove, and the pastors discovered an announcement of a meeting of the Publication Society, set for December 11. Since it was impossible for any Minnesota men to leave thus abruptly for Chicago, they became angry and sent a telegram protesting against the holding of a meeting on short notice.¹⁷

Sjöblom wrote to Norelius when he got home: "We were astonished and angry when we saw that the meeting was to begin so soon that no one from this state could get there. They took the opportunity well in hand; for they had seen by the papers that we were gathered for Conference meeting, wherefore no one could come. For my part I see in this a bitter, intentional insult. We sent a protest by telegram. But of course the fellows would pay no attention to that. What do you see in what has happened? This is the second time in three months that they have showed that Minnesota is a subdued corner of the land, for whose wishes they need have no respect, but this is only a matter of ordering and commanding. After the great fire we were required (that is the correct word) to gather money for the fire sufferers. Can it now be excused that a meeting was held after the big fire, without giving us an opportunity to attend if we

wanted to? Let me know by return mail what your thoughts are on this subject, and if you could at the same time send me a form for the letter I intend to write to Peters at the same time as I send the resolutions, I should be very grateful; for my pen spouts fire and flames when it is a question of writing to him. It does not help that I have a brand new gold pen point.”¹⁸

Norelius succeeded in quenching the fire that threatened to break forth from Sjöblom’s pen. In a few days Sjöblom wrote to Norelius:

“The admonition to be peacable came at the right time, for it was needed; for I was exceedingly put out at the brethren in Illinois and thought of giving them a sermon on Ecclesiasticus 22: 25-27. (You see I could find no text in the canonical books to express my ideas.)”¹⁹

But the smoldering fires were soon ready to break out again. Sjöblom sent a report of the Minnesota Conference meeting to *Hemlandet*, but early in January it still had not appeared in print. He gave vent to his displeasure in another letter to Norelius:

“Brother, they treat us like children; when we don’t fear Erl. C., etc., but go right ahead and start a paper and say straight out that we also want to know how affairs are being conducted, since we are to share the responsibility, then they put forth a “boo”; but I have never been afraid of the dark, that is the truth. We don’t *want* to strive with them in Chicago and will not do so even if they attack us.”²⁰

And on Sunday, February 25, Sjöblom found time between morning worship and Sunday school to dash off another epistle to Norelius, with many words underscored:

“As to taking over ‘*Augustana’s* field,’ I think that *Kyrk-Tid. must do this in Minnesaota if it is to live*. We *must* have a paper for us up here, and we must work for this, to have people read it. If the people want to read *Augustana* too, that is fine; but K. T. they *must* have. The K. T. *must* therefore be not only what *Augustana* is but also what *Missionären* is. That is what I think; if you don’t think the same, we shall have to talk about it when we meet.”²¹

A movement was soon under way for a merger of *Luthersk Kyrko-Tidning* with the synodical paper, but although they were scraping the bottom of the barrel financially Sjöblom did not want to hear of any merger:

"The money came just in time. I had only \$7.00 to give de Remee when No. 5 was ready. Perhaps I'll get something soon on my salary. Haven't received last year's salary yet. . . .

"No, no, not any merger, unless they just simply want to bring home the stolen goods, so that *Missionären* quits, and L. K. T. takes over its field entirely. Oh yes, brother, there is mettle in you yet, even though at times things get a bit troublesome, but it will dry up."²²

In spite of Sjöblom's emphatic "No, no," plans for a merger went ahead. Replying to a letter from Norelius in September, Hasselquist wrote:

"I have received your letter with the several important plans. Something must surely be done for the merging of our newspaper forces, which now consume one another, not, of course, by mutual strife, but for pecuniary reasons. But it is a rather serious plan to merge them into a weekly paper, as it would require much, both copy as well as supplies; perhaps the first year we could limit it to a semi-monthly paper with one and a half sheets each time. But I cannot say that I have anything against a weekly paper. Cervin, I think, would be excellent as office editor, and if he were willing to undertake it, then the whole management would be favorably disposed to the matter. But Red Wing can hardly be the place of publication, being so near to the North Pole as it is. On the other hand, I propose Rock Island, the future spiritual center of our church activity in America, and there we thought of erecting a rather respectable building next fall."²³

In a letter written in October Hasselquist again refers to the merger as Norelius' plan. The plan was to combine all the four papers published in different parts of the Synod, *Rätta Hemlandet och Augustana*, *Missionären*, *Luthersk Kyrko-Tidning*, and *Nytt och Gammalt*, the last named paper being a paper started in the spring of 1873 by Rev. Olof Olsson in Lindsborg, Kansas. The merger took place at the end of 1873, and the new paper came out as a semi-monthly, 24 pages per issue, in 1874 under the name *Augustana*, with Hasselquist, Norelius, and Olof Olsson as editors. A. R. Cervin, Hasselquist's brother-in-law, was the office editor.

The agitation, of which Sjöblom had been the spearhead, and in which Norelius had a share, had the effect of putting an end to the Publication Society as a Church project. Erland Carls-

son, who had devoted more time and effort to it than anyone else, wearied of the constant criticism. He as well as the other officers of the Publication Society expressed willingness to yield their thankless task to other hands. In 1872 the Synod placed the publishing business in the hands of the board of Augustana College and Theological Seminary by constituting them the board of the Society. The members were T. N. Hasselquist, Erland Carlsson, Jonas Swensson, John Johnson, clergymen; Jonas Engberg, Johannes Samuelson, J. H. Wistrand, and Nelson Chester, laymen.

The idea of selling the business gained ground. At this time the Synod was in sore pecuniary straits. The location of Augustana College and Theological Seminary at Paxton had proved to be a mistake, and its continued existence was doubtful. The publishing business had been carried on for many years for the benefit of the Synod but with indifferent success and without financial profit. Now that the plant had been destroyed and serious losses sustained, there was no hope of gain from this source for several years to come. All were agreed that the maintenance of the school was vital to the Synod, while in the opinion of the majority, the publishing business was not. Despairing of its ability to keep both, the Synod decided to sacrifice the latter in order to save the former. It is fair to assume that without the substantial annual income for the school secured by the sale of *Hemlandet* and of the bookstore, printing office, and publishing rights of the Synod, its college and seminary could hardly have been maintained and would have been still less likely to establish itself in Rock Island during the financial crisis of 1873 and following years.

Many years after the transaction Norelius wrote the following explanation: "Since I have been blamed as the man who probably most urgently advocated that the Synod dispose of the old Publication Society by selling *Hemlandet*, the bookstore and the printing plant, an act which was afterward and still continues to be branded as the height of foolishness, if not worse, I here take the liberty of making an explanation. An act must be judged according to the time and circumstances, if it is to be rightly judged. Had conditions then been what they became later and what they now are, I admit that it would have been very unwise for the Synod to dispose of the Publication Society; but as things were at the time, I doubt very seriously that we could

have acted otherwise. Hasselquist had the very best reason for asking: 'How shall we be able to support this large household? What can prevent the dissolution of the school?' The Publication Society brought us nothing to speak of at that time, but by selling its property we gained the means for the maintenance of the school. Necessity knows no law. We doubtless did the right thing in selling out the publication business rather than to have let the school go by the board. As between two evils, we chose the lesser."

Hemlandet was sold late in the year 1872 for \$10,000 payable in semi-annual installments of \$500. The purchasers were two employees of the Society, John A. Enander, the editor, and G. A. Bohman, the manager, who assumed its publication with the first week in December. With the sale went an agreement by the college board of directors not to publish any other general newspaper so long as the *Hemlandet* was published as specified in the bill of sale, and the agreement was ratified by the Synod. In 1873 the board was still determined to retain the remainder of the business, but when the Synod resolved to move the college and seminary to Rock Island and had to draw on every resource for the funds needed, the board, after asking for power to act, sold the rights and privileges of the Publication Society, its present publications, copyrights, plates, stock of books, etc., for the sum of \$17,000, payable in semi-annual installments. Jonas Engberg, Charles P. Holmberg, and Rev. C. O. Lindell purchased the business in partnership and assumed charge in July, 1874.²⁴

The Publication Society had lasted fifteen years under Synod control. Another fifteen years went by before the Synod again had a publishing house of its own, Augustana Book Concern.

NOTES

¹There is no word in English which directly translates the name Skaffaren. Literally it would be "he who brings." Freely translated it might be given as "Householder" or "Steward."

²T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Jan. 11, 1870 (MS).

³T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Jan. 25, 1870 (MS).

⁴*Missionären*, Jan., 1870.

⁵This plan was adopted by Synod in 1871 and remained in effect until 1938.

⁶C. A. Hedengran to Norelius, Aug. 27, 1871 (MS).

⁷J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Aug. 1, 1871 (MS).

⁸P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Oct. 14, 1871 (MS).

⁹P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Oct. 21, 1871 (MS).

¹⁰Andrew Jackson to Norelius, Oct. 29, 1871 (MS).

- ¹¹G. Peters to Norelius, Nov. 16, 1871 (MS).
¹²P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Nov. 14 and Nov. 18, 1871 (MSS).
¹³P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Dec. 2, 1871 (MS).
¹⁴J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Dec. 18, 1871 (MS).
¹⁵T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Apr. 12, 1872 (MS).
¹⁶P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Dec. 12, 1871 (MS).
¹⁷*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Dec. 6-9, 1871, Mimeo ed., 49f.
¹⁸P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Dec. 12, 1871 (MS).
¹⁹P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Dec. 19, 1871 (MS). It turned out that the meeting scheduled for December 11 was only a board meeting not a meeting of the Society.
²⁰P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Jan. 11, 1872 (MS).
²¹P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Feb. 25, 1872 (MS).
²²P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Jan. 1, 1873 (MS). The "drying up" refers to Norelius' lung trouble.
²³T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Sept. 5, 1873 (MS).
²⁴Ernst W. Olson, *Fiftieth Anniversary, Augustana Book Concern*, 10ff; O. V. Holmgren in *Minnesskrift, Augustana-Synodens Femtioårsjubileum*, 298; Norelius, *Historia*, II, 296.

Chapter 22

THE CHURCH'S CHOSEN LEADER

THE CONTROVERSY about rival newspapers and church periodicals was only one phase of a more complex situation which had been developing for several years. It tied in with the "school question," the different viewpoints on the administration of home mission activity, and in fact it had to do with the leadership in the Augustana Synod and the very character of the Synod.

To understand the position taken by Norelius is not always easy. Undoubtedly there was a developing and a maturing in his thinking in the 'seventies and the 'eighties.

Norelius had served as president of the Minnesota Conference several times during the first dozen years of its history. During this early period the Conference met three times a year (except in 1862 when it met twice). A new chairman was elected each time. His duties were only to preside at the convention at which he was elected, (and the whole delegation usually numbered only twelve or fifteen) and to plan the program of divine services for the next convention.

The first move toward a stronger administrative setup came in 1870, when it was decided to elect a president for a one-year term. Norelius was the first man to serve under this rule, and he was re-elected in 1871, 1872, and 1873. This was a recognition of his ability as a leader and his popularity in the Conference, and it also served to strengthen him with the leaders in Illinois and other parts of the Synod.

There were several other changes in the form of administration which also helped to bring Norelius into greater prominence at this time. Of special importance in this respect was the administration of home missions.

Since the time of its organization the Minnesota Conference had had a home mission committee whose duty it was to try to secure a travelling missionary to visit the outlying settlements and the vacant congregations in the Conference. Norelius himself had been the first one to serve in that capacity. Always short of funds and short of men for the work that should be done, the home mission committee had a difficult, sometimes almost a hope-

less, task. The same situation prevailed in the other conferences.

At the 1870 convention of the Synod a new approach was made to the problem of home missions, and a new plan was adopted. The Synod was to have charge of home missions through a Central Board, consisting of four pastors and four laymen, and the President of the Synod as *ex officio* chairman. The Conferences were also to elect home mission boards to work together with the Central Board. The church council in each congregation was to serve as mission committee to arouse a greater zeal for missions. This seemed an ideal arrangement when adopted, but it failed to distinguish clearly the division of authority between the Central Board and the Conference Boards.

Norelius and Sjöblom constituted the Conference home mission committee at the time when the Synod adopted the new plan. Somewhat hastily, it seems, they considered their committee dissolved by the Synod's action, and did not even give a report at the next Conference meeting.¹

The Conference elected a new committee according to the new plan, with Norelius as *ex officio* chairman and the other members being Pastors Peter Sjöblom and Peter Carlson, and Messrs. H. Olson, Red Wing, and A. Johnson, Vasa.

According to the plan of the Synod the Conference committee had no power to call pastors to serve as missionaries, but only to recommend them to the Central Board. However, Pastor P. A. Cederstam had been in the service of the Conference since January 1, 1870, and the Committee retained him in this position and reported on his activities and also the work of Jonas Magny (ordained in June of that year) for two months. Several areas had been explored and new fields were being cultivated in four general regions: Duluth and Superior area; Red River Valley around Alexandria; Meeker County in central Minnesota; Watonwan county and the whole southwestern corner of Minnesota. Dakota Territory was also mentioned as a field that needed to be explored. It was stated that instead of one travelling missionary for the Conference they would need one for each of the regions. During the year the Conference had received from its congregations for home mission work about \$600. The committee expressed the hope that it might be \$1,000 in 1871. The Conference voted to request the Synod's Central Board to secure a pastor for each one of the four home mission areas in the Conference.²



Pastor and Mrs. Norelius, at their
golden wedding anniversary, 1905.





"Jubilee Hall," Rock Island, Illinois, where Augustana Synod celebrated its 50th anniversary, 1910.



Procession at Synod, 1910. Norelius stands fourth from the left, Bishop von Scheele at his right.

The Central Board could hardly be expected to accomplish the impossible. As a matter of fact the home mission work in Minnesota continued much the same as before. Cederstam was the one full time missionary through 1870, 1871, and the first half of 1872. Magny served part time, devoting his efforts particularly to the Red River Valley. Peter Beckman, who had moved from Spring Garden to Kandiyohi County in 1868, organized several new congregations in that region. But the manpower was never sufficient.

The Conference did not feel that anything had been gained by the plan to have a Central Board directing all the home mission work. Consequently, at the convention in May, 1871, the Conference elected a committee consisting of Norelius, Rev. J. G. Lagerstrom, and Mr. J. Olson, to formulate a petition, to be presented to Synod, asking that the Minnesota Conference might be an independent mission district, not under the direction and control of the Central Board. The committee which formulated the petition also added one suggestion which was approved by the Conference. The proposal, in its entirety, was as follows:

"Whereas this Conference needs to use all the mission funds that are gathered here; and whereas we are so distantly located and it consequently is a troublesome and roundabout way to have our mission affairs go through the hands of the Central Board,

"Therefore Be it Resolved,

"1. That the Conference requests that Synod at its next meeting let this Conference take its home mission affairs entirely into its own hands and report thereon directly to Synod.

"2. That the Conference ask the Publication Society to let the Conference, at the beginning of next year, take over the publication of *Missionären* as its own paper."

Then the Conference took another step—a long step—beyond that which had been recommended by the committee. A resolution was adopted that the Conference ask the Synod, at its next meeting, to consider whether the time had now come for the first preparatory steps toward making the Minnesota Conference a separate synod.³

The Synod granted the first request, that the Minnesota Conference should have the right to manage its own home mission affairs. The second request, concerning the publishing of *Missionären*, was referred to the Publication Society, and was denied by that organization. The third request was denied. However,

there could be no mistaking the feelings of many of the Minnesota brethren. There was in many minds a strong desire for independence.⁴

In 1873 the Conference again discussed the matter of its relationship to the Synod. Instead of petitioning for independence the Conference at this time expressed itself in favor of dividing the Augustana Synod into district synods. Norelius was president of the Conference and was also at this time a member of the Synod's constitution committee. At the synod in 1873 the committee reported that it had no proposed new constitution to submit, but recommended that a new committee be elected, and that the new committee be instructed to write a proposal for a constitution that would make the Augustana Synod a general synod, divided into district synods. Norelius was elected to the new committee. A proposed constitution was submitted in 1874, but no action was taken on it until in 1875, when it was adopted on first reading. When it was taken up for final action in 1876 it was defeated by a vote of 94 to 6.

This constitution, if it had been adopted, would have provided for a meeting of the Augustana Synod once in three years. The district synods would have convened annually. Training of pastors was to be only in Augustana Seminary. Ordination would have been by the district synods.⁵

Norelius has been given the blame (or the credit, depending on one's viewpoint) for this spirit of independence in Minnesota. To say that he was or that he was not the one who created this attitude in Minnesota would be an oversimplification. There were many men and many factors involved. Ever since 1854 he had been working for the furtherance of the interests of the Lutheran Church in Minnesota. He had a conviction that Minnesota would be a stronghold of Lutheranism, a conviction not shared by his older contemporaries in Illinois, who in general held the common prejudices against Minnesota and its "hyperborean climate."

Others in Minnesota were more outspoken than Norelius in favor of separation from the Augustana Synod. Hedengran at Chisago Lake had often written to Norelius urging separation. Peter Carlson, Andrew Jackson, P. A. Cederstam, and various laymen had often shown their dissatisfaction with the Synod and its leaders. But undoubtedly the one who was most ready to declare his independence and to fight for it was Sjöblom in Red

Wing, who sensed that his star was in the ascendancy and who was willing to rise whenever a parliamentary battle was being waged.

Was Norelius merely an astute politician who let the others fight his battles while he "sat on the fence with his ear to the ground"?

More tactful, perhaps more subtle than many others, yet he was no mere clever schemer. In an increasing measure he had the confidence of others. There were, of course, those who differed with him, but they knew him and spoke of him as a man with integrity of character, fair and honest in his dealings.

Certain changes in the administrative methods of the Conference were brought about at this time. A new constitution was adopted, which among other things, provided for the establishment of an executive committee, which was to see that Conference resolutions were put into effect, and also to supervise the home mission work. This committee, first elected in 1871, with Norelius as *ex officio* chairman, found itself busy with increasing duties. The Conference "chairman" was now "president." His work was increasing, and so were also his opportunities for leadership in the church.⁶

T. N. Hasselquist had been elected president of the Synod year by year from 1860 to 1869. When the Synod met in 1870 he was on a journey to Sweden, and the Synod decided that it should elect a president who was present. Jonas Swensson of Andover, Illinois was the choice of the delegates and he was re-elected in 1871, 1872, and 1873. He did not live to complete his fourth term. His death occurred on December 20, 1873.

Therefore it was known half a year ahead that a new president must be elected by the delegates to Synod in June, 1874.

Since the Synod at that time had no vice president it devolved upon the secretary to serve as president *pro tem*, and to open the convention. The secretary was Peter Sjöblom.

In May the Minnesota Conference had elected Sjöblom president to succeed Norelius. This may have been part of a plan.

Norelius was elected president of the Synod. We have his own testimony to the effect that this came as a surprise to him, and that, as far as he could remember, no one had spoken to him about it beforehand.⁷

Whether Norelius had no faint idea that he might be elected is a matter that may be left for conjecture. Certainly he had

not sought the position. However, the election of Sjöblom in place of Norelius as Conference president in May and the election of Norelius as president of Synod in June could be an indication that certain of the brethren in Minnesota had been busy writing letters in the months immediately following the burial of the late president Jonas Swensson.

Now that Norelius was at the helm, would there be a sudden change from the course charted for ten years by Hasselquist and followed by Swensson during his brief tenure: Perhaps there were some who hoped for this, but if so they were disappointed. Perhaps there were some who feared there would be radical changes. If so their fears were groundless. Though Norelius and Hasselquist had often held opposite opinions on many matters, yet in their basic religious and churchly concepts there were no important differences. Hasselquist has been characterized as "Low Church" and it is said that he put this stamp on the Synod.⁸

Norelius could not be classed as high church, but he probably leaned a little more in that direction than Hasselquist did. But in doctrine and in essentials of the Christian religion there was no difference between the two men. And even on the question of the unity of the Augustana Synod it will become clear that these two men agreed far more than some have supposed. The election of Norelius to the presidency did not result in the dissolution of the Augustana Synod into little district synods.

Norelius was at this time forty years old, with nineteen years of experience in the ministry. This experience included not only regular pastoral duties in a well established parish, but also the hard groundwork of starting new congregations in new pioneer settlements. He knew of personal sorrow and illness, he had known poverty and self-sacrifice. He had experienced the heartache and discouragement of seemingly useless efforts among ungrateful people. He had participated in church building projects. He had seen spiritual lethargy and spiritual awakenings.

He had taught school, he had founded institutions. He had served as editor and writer. He had served on a number of committees and boards in the Synod, including the Synod's first Seminary committee, the first foreign mission committee, the first catechism committee, the first historical archives committee, the first Pension Fund committee, the first liturgy committee, the first statistical committee, the first Church Extension Fund committee, and the first parish education committee,

besides numerous minor committee assignments. He had written the constitution for the Minnesota Conference, and had participated in writing constitutions for the Seminary, for St. Ansgar's Academy, for local congregations, and for the Synod. He was well known to many persons in other Lutheran synods. He had a vision of the broad scope of the Lutheran Church in America and he was familiar with details of the affairs and the history of the Church he now was summoned to lead.

The Augustana Synod, now fourteen years old, had 211 congregations, served by 93 pastors. There were 30,127 communicants and a total of 51,492 baptized members. The Synod was divided into five conferences—Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and New York—the Illinois Conference being the largest.

Norelius was elected president seven years in succession, serving from 1874 to 1881. There was no salary for the president. When Norelius was first elected he was granted an allowance of \$50.00 per year for stationery and postage. At his re-election in 1877 he declined to serve stating that he considered it impossible to serve the Synod while also serving as pastor of a large congregation. The lay delegate from Vasa declared that the congregation did not wish to bear the burden of paying the salary of an assistant pastor. The Synod then agreed to pay \$500 per year as salary for an assistant in Vasa, and Norelius accepted re-election.

The Synod did not even grant the president an allowance for travel expenses, but as ex officio chairman of the Central Board of Missions he made occasional visits to outlying sections of the Synod. In the fall of 1878 he undertook a journey to "Indian Territory" (now Oklahoma) for the purposes of investigating the possibilities of mission work among the Indians. In the spring of 1879 he visited the New York Conference, which at that time included also New England, preaching in the majority of the churches in that Conference, investigating the newly established immigrant mission in New York and other mission places in the east.⁹

A unique home mission journey by the synodical president, together with his old friend and co-laborer, Peter Carlson of East Union, was the trip by covered wagon in the summer of 1876 to the settlements along the upper Minnesota River. Carlson's son drove the horses. For a month they made their home in their prairie schooner, driving from place to place between

St. Peter and Big Stone Lake, holding services in a score of settlements. Sometimes they were given lodging in the homes of the settlers, but most of the nights were spent in the wagon. They found that it served its purpose very well. The total cost of the trip was about \$25.00.¹⁰

The most difficult problem that the Augustana Synod faced in this period of its history was the rise of the Waldenströmian movement which brought about bitter dissensions in many congregations and the eventual loss of thousands of members. As president Norelius was faced with the painful duty of inquiring into the orthodoxy of several of his fellow pastors, and presiding at one "heresy trial." At the Synod in Princeton, Illinois in 1878, the Rev. J. G. Princell of New York, who had been a pastor in the Synod since 1872, was suspended from the ministry for teaching the Waldenströmian doctrine.

A few others were suspended without public trial, and some withdrew from the Synod voluntarily. In spite of losses to this movement the Synod continued to grow, and in 1881, when Norelius stepped down from the presidency there were 332 congregations, 147 pastors, 41,976 communicants, and 74,716 baptized members, an increase of approximately fifty per cent in seven years.

NOTES

¹*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Sept. 10, 1870, Mimeo ed., 29.

²*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Dec. 8, 1870, Mimeo ed., 314.

³*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, May 18-20, 1871, Mimeo ed., 37f. The Minutes do not tell who introduced the last resolution.

⁴*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 8-14, 1871, 34f.

⁵*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, May 21-26, 1873, Mimeo ed., 74; *Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 24-July 1, 1873, 16; June 24-July 1, 1874, 15; June 19-29, 1875, 16f., 47f.; June 24-July 3, 1876, 44.

⁶The new constitution was adopted in December, 1871. *Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Mimeo ed., 42ff.

⁷Norelius, *Historia*, II, 170.

⁸Ander, O. F., *T. N. Hasselquist*, 211ff.

⁹*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 19-27, 1879, 12; *Skaffaren*, Dec., 1878, Jan., Feb. 15, Mar. 1, Apr. 1, May 1, May 15, June 15, 1879 contains detailed accounts of these two journeys.

¹⁰*Missionären*, Sept. and Oct., 1876; tr. in Johnson, *A Church Is Planted*, 296ff.

Chapter 23

DOCTRINAL DISSENSION

THE RELIGIOUS movement known as Waldenströmianism had its beginning in Sweden and spread rapidly to the Swedish settlements in America. Professor Peter P. Waldenström (who once had been called to Augustana Seminary but declined) became the successor to C. O. Rosenius upon the latter's death in 1868. Waldenström, up to that time, was known as a pietist of the same spirit and attitude as Rosenius, faithful to the Lutheran Church and its doctrines, while seeking to bring about a deepening of the personal spiritual life of the members of the Church.

Soon after Waldenström became editor of *Pietisten* and leader of the pietist movement in Sweden he began to set forth a doctrine of the atonement which differed from the accepted teachings of the Lutheran Church, being instead very similar to the ancient Socinianism.¹

Waldenström's interpretation of the Bible was set forth in a literalistic way which combined clever use of proof texts with an authoritarian air of superiority over critics and ridicule of those who dared oppose him. His teachings, and even more, his personality, proved irresistible to thousands, including many of those who formerly had been Rosenian pietists.

The fervor of this new movement rose to a high pitch, but instead of producing spiritual warmth it tended to generate theological heat. There was an emphasis on free prayer and testimony, revival services and awakenings. This had a tendency toward emotionalism, deep dissatisfaction with the "coldness" and "formality" of the state church in Sweden and likewise with the Augustana Synod in America.

They called themselves "Mission Friends," and were generally known by this name in America. As time went on they split into several groups, "Mission Covenant," "Free Mission," "Evangelical Free," and "Swedish Congregational."

It was in 1872 that Waldenström proclaimed his new teaching. Within a few years every major Swedish settlement in America was more or less influenced by the movement, as immi-

grants arrived bringing with them the "precious writings" of "our dear Waldenström." Many could quote by memory long passages from Waldenström's sermons, and did so with raptured expressions and other-worldly feelings of elation.

It was to be expected that a clash would occur in the Lutheran congregations when the new doctrine appeared. Communities that previously were characterized by unity and harmony suddenly became split by dissension and bitter strife. Conscientious pastors were in a quandary as the most violent and even vile language was used in the arguments both publicly and privately.

An anonymous letter received by Norelius, while serving as president of the Synod, from someone in Chicago who signed his letter "Separatist" indicates the extreme to which the practice of vituperation could go:

"I think that I, together with the Lord Jesus and the flock of those saved by Him shall pronounce judgment on such a lame, useless, dishonest servant as you are, and finally direct you and your hellish followers to the fires of hell. Who shall have such an end if not you who are the devil's head and yet call yourself a Christian servant? No, you are the devil himself or else you would have a conscience and would do your duty and settle the complaints that come to you from the suffering members of Christ. But you, you condemned creature, you are silent as a stone and are like a dumb ass, fit to be dug down in a manure pile. God have mercy on such venomous creatures of the devil. Such confounded asses the Lord Jesus had around Him in the days of His flesh, and since I truly live in Him and He in me I have to have the same devil's filth around me. . . ."

Such insane outbursts were not truly characteristic of the rank and file on either side of the controversy, but there were frequent occasions when unseemly and unchristian epithets were hurled in both directions.

The Augustana Synod, of course, could not deny its pastors and members their religious freedom. It could seek to persuade them to abide by the Lutheran faith and their constitution. The problem, however, was that some of the "Mission Friends" insisted that they were the ones who held the true Lutheran faith, and saw no reason why they should leave the Church to which they belonged. Some pastors who embraced the new doctrine did

not willingly leave their positions as shepherds of Augustana Synod parishes.

At the Synod in 1874, Sjöblom as temporary president reported that certain congregations had been affected by the new teaching, but that none had been "torn to pieces." Norelius in his first report in 1875 mentioned that only two congregations had suffered serious strife and dissension because of the new teaching.

In 1877 Norelius reported that Rev. A. N. Sweders in Boone, Iowa had been found to hold and proclaim doctrines which in several respects were not in accord with the beliefs of the Lutheran Church. In the fall of 1876 Norelius had delegated Rev. J. Auslund in St. Paul to visit Sweders and confer with him, but got no satisfactory reply. Later Sweders himself had admitted that his views were at variance with the teachings of the Synod, and he was excluded from membership.³

The trial of Rev. J. G. Princell took place in 1878. He was pastor of the Gustavus Adolphus Church in New York, the oldest of the Synod's churches in the metropolis. He was a man of ability. Through a neighboring pastor Norelius learned that Princell was beginning to follow the Waldenströmian doctrine of the atonement, and Norelius wrote and asked him to declare his position. Princell did not reply. Norelius also conferred with other pastors of the Synod in regard to it.⁴

Princell would not yield and the Synod's Ministerium took up the case. He was asked to give an answer to the question: "What are Pastor Princell's views on the atonement through the death of Christ and the sinner's justification by faith alone?"

His reply, given in writing the following day, was:

"1. God, the heavenly Father, did not need to be reconciled, therefore in the death of Christ there was no atonement made with God as the object.

"2. Since both the Word of God and experience teach that 'the world lieth in the evil one,' continually commits sin, is at enmity against God and, except for those who by faith in the Lord Christ are taken out of the world, shall be condemned for its sin, therefore there was no completed atonement in the death of Christ with the world as the object.

"3. That which actually happened in the death of Christ once and for all was that therein and thereby the most powerful motive for man's reconciliation was prepared, but also that the

one and only true and eternally valid means for this reconciliation was prepared, wherefore the Biblical words 'the death of Christ,' 'the blood of Christ,' 'Christ's sacrifice,' 'the cross,' etc., indicate just this one essential means of atonement for all men.

"4. Insofar as this means of atonement implies the possibility for the realization of all men's salvation and blessedness one can believe in and speak of Christ's substitutionary work, namely, that the prepared means of atonement has been put in place of the sinner's otherwise inescapable lost condition, and sinners may therefore choose between the proffered means of reconciliation (salvation) or to remain in their lost condition; on the other hand I cannot believe in or speak of that Christ has suffered and died, etc., instead of man in a real and actual sense.

"5. When a sinner, without any worthiness, ability, or merit of his own, believes only and solely in Jesus Christ, who is the Saviour of sinners, and whose suffering, death, and shedding of blood (which are His merits) constitute the means of reconciliation—when the sinner believes in this Jesus, then his sins are forgiven, he receives from God life in his soul, and is received as God's child. Thus the sinner becomes righteous and is not only declared to be but is considered ('reckoned') and treated by his God as righteous. Someone else's righteousness is not reckoned unto him, but the Lord, his Saviour, Redeemer and ever faithful friend, is his righteousness.

"The above, my esteemed and beloved brethren, is my answer to the question that was put to me, and my explanation of my present views on these important subjects, stated as briefly and concisely as I can do it in the short time I have had. Let me add: I am only a weak, short-sighted and fallible person, no one can feel that any more than I can. I may have misconstrued in some or in all points the immeasurable and unsearchable subject referred to here. If, now that these subjects have been so widely considered at this meeting both privately and publicly, you will, as I humbly pray, grant me reasonable time for further prayer, thought, and humble study of God's Word, then, if I find that I am wrong in any or all of it, I shall with all my heart take it back."

A committee consisting of Olof Olsson, Erland Carlsson, P. J. Swärd, J. Wikstrand, and H. Olson, was directed to study Princell's statement and reported their findings:

"He denies:

"1. That God was the object of the atonement, or that He was reconciled.

"2. He denies that the world was reconciled and says that in the death of Christ there was no completed atonement.

"3. He denies that Christ is the atonement for our sins when he says that what happened in the death of Christ is only the motive and the means for atonement.

"4. He denies that any actual redemption took place in the death of Christ, since he says that in the death of Christ the possibility of man's salvation was prepared.

"5. He denies that Christ has suffered and died instead of man in any real and actual sense."

Thus the committee had concluded that Princell denied the teachings of the Bible and the Lutheran Church. This was on Saturday. Final action was postponed until Monday. On that day he was suspended until such time as he would publicly retract his errors of doctrine.

The secretary of the Synod recorded in the Minutes that the members of the ministerium showed much consideration for Princell, and that it was extremely difficult to listen to him as he expressed his divergent teachings. "Several pastors could not refrain from weeping."

Princell did not succeed in taking his congregation out of the Synod. After some hesitation they voted to stay with the Lutheran Church. C. E. Lindberg of Philadelphia was called and became their pastor.

On his trip to the New York Conference in the spring of 1879, Norelius had opportunity to visit some of the congregations that were wavering between Augustana and the Mission Friends. A congregation in Massachusetts had issued a call to Princell after he had been suspended from the ministry. The members expected a terrific dressing down when the president of Synod came to speak to them. A letter from a pastor in Boston tells this story:

"Your visit there was not without blessing. One of the members of the congregation told me that they had imagined you as a veritable tyrant, who would give them a stern examination; wherefore the church board had held several private meetings to consider how they might be able to stand up and answer to this examination. They had, as he expressed it, been trembling on their way to the church. But, to their surprise, they heard

from you a simple presentation of the Word of God about Jesus and what He had done for sinners, and not a word about factions, about the congregation's leaving the Synod, about Princell or the unwise action of the congregation in calling Princell.

"This gripped them so deeply that they decided to remain in the Synod, and they considered you not as a tyrant, but as a dear brother in the Lord and they came to this conclusion: When the Synod's president is a true Christian, then it cannot be so terribly bad with the other pastors as the hue and cry may have indicated."⁶

This incident reveals not only the desire of Norelius to avoid strife and argument in the affairs of the Church, but even more his childlike faith in the power of the Word of God. He did not relish official visitations in places where there was trouble. On various occasions he appointed other pastors to go for him. When he found it necessary to speak out he could be firm, yet courteous, objective yet brotherly in his manner.

The Waldenströmian movement continued for half a century to draw members away from the Augustana congregations, but the total number would be impossible to determine. In hundreds of cities, towns, and rural communities a "Mission" church was built, usually near the Lutheran church. Many of the "Mission Friends" had left the Lutheran Church before emigrating from Sweden. But undoubtedly several thousand Augustana members were won over to the new doctrine. This number would have been larger had it not been for the firmness and clarity with which Norelius and other Augustana leaders, particularly Olof Olsson, held forth the Biblical doctrine of the atonement.

NOTES

¹Waldenström formulated his doctrine in five points, as follows:

1. The Fall of man did not cause any change in the heart of God.
2. Therefore it was no anger or wrath of God against man which through the Fall stood in the way of man's salvation.
3. The only change that was occasioned by the Fall was a change in man, in that he became sinful and thereby fell away from God and from the life which is in Him.
4. As a result of this an atonement was needed, not an atonement that appeased God and presented Him again as being gracious, but an atonement that took away man's sin and presented him again as righteous.
5. This atonement has taken place in Jesus Christ.

Fritz Hägg, *Svenska Alliansmissionen Genom Hundra År*, 323; See also Conrad Emil Lindberg, *Christian Dogmatics*, 284.

The direct spiritual descendants of Waldenström both in Sweden and in America have largely given up the Waldenströmian doctrine of reconciliation. See Hägg, *op. cit.*, who traces Waldenström's doctrine from Abelard, through Schleiermacher and Ritschl; also Ernst Anderson, *Waldenström och hans försöningslära; Trosvittnet*, 1948, 347.

²"Separatist" to Norelius, Jan. 1, 1879 (MS).

³*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 21-29, 1877, 10, 13; Norelius to A. N. Sweders, Nov. 23, 1876.

⁴Norelius to J. G. Princell, Jan. 2, 1878 (MS) copy; O. Olsson to Norelius, Jan. 26, 1878 (MS); Conrad E. Lindberg to Norelius, Feb. 8, 1878 (MS); P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Mar. 5, 1878 (MS).

⁵*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 17-24, 1878, 54ff.

⁶C. F. Johanson to Norelius, May 6, 1879 (MS).

Chapter 24

CATASTROPHE IN VASA

COME OUT of your corner to somewhere near the center," wrote Hasselquist to Norelius, and the center he had in mind was Rock Island, where he himself lived. He was willing to have Norelius continue in the presidency of the Synod. but it seemed incongruous to Hasselquist that the president should live in Minnesota. He even offered to resign from his "good little congregation"—First Lutheran—if Norelius would consent to move to Rock Island.¹

Norelius was not longing to continue in office, nor was he longing to move to "the center." He tried to get rid of his duties as president both in 1879 and 1880, but was reelected and the salary was increased to \$1,000.00 per year. At one time he even indicated that he was so weary of his job that he threatened to leave the Synod.²

There may have been several reasons for Norelius' dissatisfaction, and it is almost certain that it was due at least in part to the financial system in the Synod, or rather the lack of any system. From references in letters, it is evident that Norelius favored the idea of a salaried president who would devote all his time to the work of the Synod. Hasselquist too was in favor of this, in order that the president should be able to visit the congregations, but he was convinced that the people would not be willing to pay salary for a president living in Minnesota.³

When Norelius in 1879 was voted a salary of \$1,000, the pastors of the Synod were all assessed one-half per cent of their salary, and each congregation was to lift an offering some time during the year. But many failed to respond and the Synod was obliged to call on the delinquent ones to pay up. However, Norelius in his report to Synod in 1881, suggested that a better financial system be inaugurated, that there should be either a Synodical finance committee or one man to serve as finance officer. These suggestions led to no definite action.⁴

Norelius reluctantly accepted reelection in 1879 and 1880, but in 1881 he was unable to attend the Synod because of illness. Rev. Erland Carlsson was elected as his successor.

During Norelius' seven years as president the Augustana Synod had experienced an era of expansion. One hundred twenty-two new congregations were organized, scattered all across the nation from Massachusetts to Oregon, from upper Michigan to Texas. The first outreach to a foreign mission field also came in this period. One can only try to imagine the feelings of the synodical president when he received a letter from a stranger, a young man studying at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia. The man's name was A. B. Carlson. He stated that he was the only Swedish student at the Seminary. He had heard a Danish Lutheran pastor, Rev. Gronning, make an appeal for missionaries to India, and he offered himself as a candidate. He inquired as to the wishes of the Synod's leaders and expressed his willingness to listen to their counsel. No one else at the Seminary had offered to go, and if no one would go the Lutheran mission would soon pass into the hands of others.⁵

This letter was the beginning of the Augustana Synod's direct participation in foreign missions. Carlson was ordained by Norelius in 1878 on a call to the Lutheran field in India. His term of service was unfortunately short. He suffered a sunstroke and died on March 29, 1882.⁶

During the first few years of his tenure as president Norelius had continued to serve as pastor of the Vasa congregation, which was still increasing in membership, having 803 communicants in 1877. Norelius had organized Zion Lutheran Church, Goodhue, nine miles from Vasa, in 1869 and accepted a call to serve as pastor of that little group also. He became uniquely attached to this congregation, remaining as its pastor for 46 years.

He also helped to organize St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, Cannon Falls, in 1869, and the Welch Lutheran Church in 1873—both within a few miles of Vasa—and aided them in securing pastoral service.

When Norelius accepted the call to Vasa in 1869 he stipulated that he should have an assistant. The first one called to this position was a student, S. F. Westerdahl, who served for a short time in 1869-70. Jonas Magny was then called and served about a year from the time of his ordination in 1870. Rev. A. Anderson was assistant to Norelius from 1871 to 1878, after which Rev. P. J. Swärd, a seaman's missionary in Baltimore was called. Shortly after he came to Vasa Norelius resigned and Swärd was called as regular pastor.

Norelius and his family, which now numbered three sons, had moved into a home of their own, a two-story white frame building across the road from the church. A daughter had been born on the father's birthday anniversary, October 26, 1871, and named Ebba Deodata, but she lived only five fleeting hours. The youngest son in the family, Erik Marion Sigfrid, was born in 1873.⁷

Next to his love for his own family was his attachment and concern for the Vasa Orphan's Home. Under his personal supervision for eleven years the Home had increased in size and in significance. After the Minnesota Conference accepted his offer to assume ownership and control of the institution in 1876 Norelius was relieved of some of his former duties, but he was still the kind uncle to all the children, and his interest in the Home was not diminished.

An opportunity soon came for him and others to show love and concern, in a way that no one could have foreseen or expected.

In 1877 a new building was erected to house the seventeen children that were being cared for. Miss Caroline Magny, who had become Mrs. N. J. Strandberg, was still serving as matron, and her husband as farm operator. They also had a child of their own.

July 2, 1879, was a hot, humid summer day. The atmosphere was oppressive. Toward evening two dark, ominous cloudbanks loomed on the horizon, one in the northwest, one in the southwest. The air was surcharged with electricity as night closed in.

Shortly before midnight the two storm centers met over Goodhue County, and a whirling finger of death and destruction reached down to the ground. As torrents of rain drenched the earth the tornado struck the Orphan's Home and in a few seconds it lay in scattered ruins, three children dead, several others injured, two of them so seriously that they died of their injuries.

Farm homes in the community were struck by the tornado within a few minutes, dozens of buildings were damaged and some swept away completely. In addition to the five who were killed at the Home, six persons in the community were victims of the storm. As if by a miracle two infants in cradles, one of them the Strandbergs' baby, were saved from injury when a portion of the roof fell over them as they slept.

On July 4 there was no celebration in Vasa, no noise, no shooting. Instead of the usual holiday it was a day of mourning, as ten caskets stood out on the church lawn, and the Revs. Swärd and Norelius together officiated at the largest mass funeral in the

history of Vasa. (The eleventh victim died that same day.)⁸

The task of rebuilding was begun in a few days. As soon as the dreadful news was published in the papers, gifts from individuals, congregations, and groups began to flow in. Before the end of September a granary had been built which housed the family temporarily. A new residential building was under construction and this was ready for occupancy before the end of the year. The income from all sources was \$3,577.56. Gifts continued to come from many states, reaching a total of nearly \$5,000. The cost of the new buildings was \$2,791.60. The donations more than paid for the new buildings, the old debt, and the year's expenses.⁹

The Strandbergs now left the home, and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Hultgren were engaged to take charge. Under their supervision the institution continued to expand in its program of service to homeless children. They served from 1880 to 1888 and again from 1895 to 1905. During their second period of service the institution suffered another catastrophe. The main building was destroyed by fire on January 16, 1899. A new building erected soon afterwards served its purpose until 1927 when a completely new Vasa Children's Home was built five miles from Red Wing on a farm donated by Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Anderson.¹⁰

The exact number of children cared for at the Vasa Home since 1865 is not known, since complete records for the early years are not available. However, it is safe to estimate that up to the time of Norelius' death in 1916 more than 400 children had come under the influence of the institution that Norelius founded, and to which he gave much of his time and attention for half a century.

NOTES

¹T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Mar. 22, 1879; Apr. 9, 1880 (MSS).

²*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 19-27, 1879; June 17-25, 1880; T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Apr. 9, 1880; J. P. Nyquist to Norelius, July 10, 1879 (MSS).

³T. N. Hasselquist to Norelius, Jan. 9, 1879; Mar. 2, 1879; May 4, 1879 (MSS).

⁴*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 19-27, 1879; June 17-25, 1880; July 9-18, 1881.

⁵A. B. Carlson to Norelius, Apr. 6, 1877 (MS).

⁶Swanson, S. Hjalmar, *Three Missionary Pioneers*, 7ff.

⁷Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 218ff.; Lund, Emil, *Minn. Konf. Historia, II*, 610f., 622, 631; *Vasa Church Register*, (MS) in Vasa Lutheran Church Archives.

⁸Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 248f.; *Skaffaren*, July 11, 1879.

⁹*Skaffaren*, Sept. 19, 1879; Dec. 1, 1879; Mar. 3, 1880.

¹⁰Norelius, *Vasa Illustrata*, 249f.; Lund, Emil, *Minn. Konf. Historia*, 190f.; *Minn. Conf. Minutes*, 1927, 98ff.

Chapter 25

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

AT THE TIME of Norelius' first election to the presidency of the Augustana Synod both the Synod and the Minnesota Conference were in the throes of finding new locations for their schools. Paxton was not the right place for Augustana College and Theological Seminary. East Union was not a suitable location for a college in Minnesota.

Hasselquist, who had labored so hard to get the school to Paxton in 1863, was ready six years later to mention the possibility of moving. He reported to Synod in 1869 that an offer had been made by Geneseo, Illinois, to locate the school in that community. This did not materialize. Two years later the Synod authorized the Board to establish the school somewhere in Knox, Henry, Rock Island, Bureau, or Cook counties, Illinois.¹

This resolution led to preliminary action in 1872, and a definite decision to establish the school in Rock Island was made in 1873. Work on the erection of a building was begun in 1874, and the school was opened in 1875. The place was considered ideal. Hasselquist, in his report to Synod in 1873 called the site "the most beautiful that could be found almost anywhere." It was centrally located, on the borders of Illinois and Iowa, and with direct river transportation to Minnesota. Professor A. W. Williamson even proved mathematically that the geographical center of Swedish-American settlement was but a few miles from Rock Island.²

In the meantime Minnesota had been facing a similar problem. Mention has already been made of the plan suggested by Norelius to establish the school in Minneapolis. This proposal failed when it was found that the expected donations from wealthy men in Minneapolis did not come through.

The first suggestion of moving the school to St. Peter came in a letter from Andrew Thorson, a farmer at Scandian Grove, who in 1872 had been elected Registrar of Deeds of Nicollet County. He wrote:

"When Pastors Pehrson and Ryden returned from the Conference in Carver, I was pleased to hear that a college is being

considered for our state, and that it ought to be located in Minneapolis.

"This institution will be supported by the congregations in days to come. As to the best and most advantageous place to locate it, that is a matter which will be discussed a great deal. But unnecessary delay should be avoided. This school or college should be located where the whole state will have or can expect to have good communications, and it should be in a place where property does not decrease in value, but where values would be maintained or increased. Therefore it should be in a city. It will need support, and this we can most readily secure in the cities, or in the city where the project is to be established.

"But whether Minneapolis is the right place, that is a point on which there will be many different opinions. The advantages we can count on in Minneapolis are: It is a place where we can get good support for our project. It is a rising locality. There are good communications. It is at the center of our congregations. There are many institutions of learning that we can take advantage of. If we should look only at this side of it we could hardly find another place that could compare with Minneapolis. Minneapolis is a large city or at any rate has the prospect of becoming one. The large cities are a fire into which god-fearing parents do not want to send their sons. This is a matter on which we may have various opinions. But a matter on which we all will agree, at least in the future, is that if we locate the school in Minneapolis we will have unnecessarily taken on a burden that we could have carried more easily. The cost, I mean the annual support, ought to be carefully considered. The tremendous cost of fire insurance alone is a sobering thought. Everything this institution will require will cost twice as much as it would elsewhere.

"Since talking with the pastors about this matter I have spoken to some of the prominent men here in St. Peter who would give very liberally toward such an institution here in this place. Some have said that if we could give \$20,000 toward a hotel, we certainly ought to have something to give for a Swedish college. We could no doubt get a few thousand dollars and a five-acre tract. St. Peter is a beautiful place, clean and healthful. Its location I don't need to describe further, for Pastor Norelius knows it. I have written this because other places may be considered. Say a little about this in the church papers."³

Sjöblom heard from Rev. Pehrson at Scandian Grove on the

same subject about the same time. But the committee still had hopes of getting a favorable response from interested persons in Minneapolis, and so reported to the Conference in May.⁴

The fall conference meeting was held in St. Peter, October 1-6. Norelius reported that he had again visited Minneapolis, but found insuperable obstacles in the way of their proposed project. The committee had decided to quit trying. The Conference postponed the question.

This was Thorson's opportunity. He had been preparing for it since February. A group of citizens of St. Peter appeared before the Conference on Saturday forenoon, October 4, to inquire if the Conference would be willing to establish the school in St. Peter, and if so, on what conditions.

The Conference elected a new committee to study the moving of the school, said committee to receive offers from any and all places that wished to have the institution located there. The committee consisted of Pastors Norelius, P. A. Cederstam, and C. A. Evald of Minneapolis, Messrs. A. Thorson and Carl Stark of St. Peter, and A. J. Carlson of Carver. The Conference also stipulated that it would want a building site plus donations of \$10,000. The Board was instructed to see about selling the mill at Carver.⁵

When the Conference met in February, 1874, in the Augustana Church, Minneapolis, St. Peter was ready with its offer of a site and \$10,000 for a building fund. The offer was accepted, and Norelius, Jackson, Thorson, A. J. Carlson and Frodeen were elected to choose a site from several that had been suggested. Construction of a building was to begin not later than in the spring of 1875. This committee's report, given to the Conference in May, stated that Norelius had been unable to come when they were to meet in St. Peter, but the other members had chosen a tract of land, "on a height west of the city, from which one has a beautiful view in all directions." The Conference approved the choice, and thus Gustavus Adolphus College was officially established in St. Peter. Two years elapsed before school opened at the new location, as the building project took much more time than had been anticipated.⁶

One is led to suspect that Norelius was somewhat less than enthusiastic in regard to the location of the school at St. Peter. Though he had received Thorson's letter in February, 1873, and the hope of locating the school in Minneapolis faded soon after that time, Norelius made no reference to St. Peter in any of his

reports to the Conference. At the October meeting of the Conference in St. Peter, when Thorson and his friends presented their views, the decision was to give opportunity to any and all places that might be interested. When St. Peter was chosen in February, 1874, and Norelius was elected chairman of the committee to select a site, he could find no opportunity between February and May to meet with his committee, although he had, at that time, an ordained pastor as assistant in his parish. While these facts do not prove anything, they constitute, when taken together, circumstantial evidence that Norelius was not entirely pleased with the St. Peter proposition. His disappointment over the failure of the Minneapolis project was probably much greater than it appears in his reports.

If he had such feelings on the subject he did not let them interfere with his support of the project when the Conference had voted approval. Plans were made for a large and substantial stone building, three stories and basement, which, it was thought, would be adequate to meet the needs of the school for many years to come. When completed in the late summer of 1876 it was the "school building." Some years later when other buildings were erected on the campus it became the Main building, and after the Auditorium was built it became "Old Main."

As the building neared completion in the summer of 1876 the Conference and the Board faced another problem. Who would take charge of the school? Andrew Jackson, who had cared for St. Ansgar's Academy conscientiously all through the Carver period except for one year, would not consent to be the head of the new school. Frodeen had accepted a call to the Chisago Lake Church. Norelius himself was urged to become president of the school, but declined. Several others were suggested.

Rev. J. G. Lagerstrom, pastor of First Lutheran Church, St. Peter, who was a sort of one-man executive committee of the Board, was the one who mentioned Rev. J. P. Nyquist of Chicago as a possible choice.⁷

In the same letter Lagerstrom had other worries to relate. Lightning had struck the as yet uncompleted building, causing some little damage (and the building was not yet insured). Another problem was that the contractor had not followed the plans in building the tower. "Anyone can see there's something wrong with it, still he will not admit that he is wrong, but pours out evil words against me. He has had to quit the job until it can be inspected."

Rev. Nyquist was called, and on August 25 Lagerstrom suggested that school might begin early in October. He suggested a board meeting and dedication services October 4 or 5. At the same time he suggested that \$2.00 per week be a reasonable fee for the students' board and room, if they brought their own bedding.⁸

Sjöblom, who was president of the Conference, suggested that school begin October 1, if Nyquist arrived, but that the dedication be November 1. But Norelius realized that Nyquist would need a little time to get ready, and he suggested October 16 as the opening date, with dedication November 1.⁹

Carpenters and painters were putting the finishing touches on the building when the housekeeper, a Mrs. Swenson from Rock Island, moved in on September 19. Lagerstrom was busy getting equipment. "If I can get money for it I will go to St. Paul next week to buy for the kitchen." At this time he also commented on the plans for the dedication program: "I am not much in favor of a brass band, but I hope the choir from Vasa will come and lead the singing. We can't do any singing here."¹⁰

Other pastors in the Conference began to sense that a great day was coming. Rev. Jonas Auslund in St. Paul suggested a special train to St. Peter, if 100 would go from Vasa and Red Wing. "We can get the train for \$300, and we can charge \$4.00 round trip and thus make \$100 for the school." He suggested October 31 as the date.¹¹

The new president arrived, and sixteen students had applied for entrance up to October 11. No full time English teacher had been called, but Mr. C. Holmberg was engaged in the last minute to teach until Christmas at \$35.00 per month. When school opened on the 16th there were eighteen students.¹²

October 31 was agreed on as the date of dedication. Mixups about the time for the dedication program, as well as details of the program itself, continued to plague the men in charge, until the day arrived. Then somehow all problems were solved. Perhaps a few sand burs remained in the dried grass to catch in the skirts or trousers of the visitors as they walked about admiring the new building on the hill, but those were minor problems, easily forgotten on such a festive day. The special train came, and other conveyances brought people from nearby communities. Not only the Swedes were there, but many of the "Americans" in St. Peter attended.

Norelius had scribbled down on a sheet of paper about six by

six inches in size the program for the day. This piece of paper is preserved in the Augustana Archives in Rock Island, and reads as follows:

Dedication of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota,

Oct. 31, 1876

Programme

1. Invocation
2. Singing—Sv. Psalmen No. 204, v. 2
3. Prayer by Rev. A. Jackson
4. Singing: Ära vare Gud, m. m.
5. Dedication address by Rev. E. Norelius
6. Singing—Låt dina portar öpp. m. m.
7. Act of Dedication
8. Singing, Sv. Ps. 124, v. 1, 2
9. Address in English by Rev. Kerr
10. Singing—America
11. Address in English by Rev. Livermore
12. Singing—I himlar sjungen, m. m.
13. Address in Swedish by Rev. P. Sjöblom
14. Singing—Frälsta verld, m. m.
15. Prayer and benediction, by Rev. J. Auslund.
16. Hymn, Sv. Ps. 19, v. 7 Oss Välsigna

The act is expected to begin at 10 o'clock a. m.

The act (Norelius' translation of the Swedish "akten" meaning the ceremonial service) began some time in the forenoon, but it did not end until late in the afternoon. There was time out for dinner, and somehow there was food for all.

Norelius gave the dedicatory address first in Swedish, then with some minor revisions, in English. The English version of it is given in full, as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen—Friends of education and the welfare of our common country.

"It was once said by a celebrated German divine: "America has got the stomach of an ostrich." There is truth in this blunt saying, for America has got a remarkable power to digest and assimilate the various elements of her checkered population. Where does this power inhere? Not in the air, nor in the soil, nor yet in the peculiar form of our government—much as that however has to do with the question. It is found in the diffusion of intelligence and the system of popular education. What would be the result if

all these different nationalities were left to themselves without education, without Christianity and intellectual training? Let all benighted nations with their lawlessness and crime, their anarchies and bloodshed, their poverty and fanaticism, give the answer. Let the sun of education go down and we should have every reason to tremble when we think of the future of our country.

"This is a festive day in the history of our Swedish fellow-citizens of this state. They have gathered here today to dedicate this fine building to the cause of education. As you entered you read on the marble slab above the door the name given to this institution—"Gustavus Adolphus College of the Swedish Lutheran Church." There is a whole confession of faith in that name. Gustavus Adolphus is a name that shines like a star of the first magnitude with a resplendent lustre in the firmaments of the annals of the world, and its very sound has a peculiar charm in the ears of a true Swede—not only because he was a great and good king and hero of Sweden, but because his name is associated with the greatest and dearest interests of all mankind. In every part of the world Gustavus is known as the great and successful defender of Protestant religion, and of human freedom in general. He lived and labored, he fought and died for the most momentous thoughts and principles. On the bloody field of Lutzen in Germany 244 years ago this champion of truth, of freedom of thought and conscience, of constitutional liberty and civilization breathed out his precious life, but his work did not die with him. It still lives and triumphantly attests itself in the victories of Protestant Christianity, education, humanity, intelligence and true liberty.

"In order better to understand why we desire to perpetuate the memory of Gustavus Adolphus by calling this institution after his name, you must permit me to relate a piece of history:

"The Reformation by Martin Luther in the 16th century was a mighty revolution in the kingdom of thought. A spiritual power, more despotic than imperial Rome, had like the winter's bitter cold caught the whole world in its icy embrace and every drip of life and freedom had been frozen to stiffness. To break the fetters of this power of bondage, to assert in its face the inalienable rights of men, a conflict like that of the Reformation was necessary. The spring is the time of the year when the elements of nature are brought into a mighty conflict. The storms roar, the rivers, the streams, and the brooks are swollen from the melting masses of snow and ice. But after the storms have subsided, the gentle rain

and warm sunshine have come, the ground is clothed with verdure and the blossoms charm by their fairness and perfumes—and Nature, liberated from the cold embraces of winter, rejoices like the human child over the free and beautiful summer. So the Reformation was a Springtime. Its essential fruit was the liberation of thought and conscience from human bondage. It marks the important epoch in the history of our race when the principle of freedom of thought, of conscience, of free investigations and private judgement was clearly enunciated and successfully maintained. For this we should thank God on this memorable 31st day of October when we recollect that it was on this very day in the year of our Lord 1517 Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg and thereby in the providence of God ushered in this powerful protest against the worst of all tyrannies. But one century later all that had been gained by the Reformation was threatened to be lost by the reaction of the power of darkness. Already the foes of freedom were exulting in the prospect of once more enslaving mankind. Protestant countries were devastated, cities were burned, blood was flowing like water. Abjure, abjure, prostrate yourselves before the Pope and the emperor! was the cry. The friends of liberty, of the Bible, of education and progress stood aghast at the monstrous spectacle. It was at this point Gustavus Adolphus with his devoted little flock of Swedes entered the arena. Despised and looked upon in the popular courts as the 'snow majesty of the North that soon would melt under the southern sun' he buckled on the armor of righteousness, showed his courage and his sword and told the tyrants to stop. The Lord of hosts was with him. He gained one victory upon the other, he fell, but he conquered in his very death. I need not repeat more. We all know that the peace of Westphalia secured to the Protestants of Europe equal rights with the Roman Catholics. The consequences of the work and war thus carried on by Gustavus Adolphus have indeed been most momentous to the cause of religion, education, and our modern civilization and it is only a just tribute to his memory and to the principles which he cherished and advocated when an offshoot of his people in this land name an institution of learning after him.

"Twenty-five years ago the first families from the land of Gustavus Adolphus settled in this state. Their number has since constantly increased so that they now number about 75,000 souls in Minnesota and the nearest portions of the adjacent states. They

found the land open, good and inviting and none to molest them. They were, as a general thing, poor in this world's goods, but they had what was infinitely better, good Protestant principles, morals, and intelligence. They were industrious, frugal, and possessed any amount of patience, an excellent quality for the tillers of the soil. They brought their Bibles, their hymnbooks and the spirit of Gustavus Adolphus along, and their first potato patches had hardly got over blooming before they had established churches among themselves. There are now 100 Swedish Lutheran Churches that are directly interested in this institution. A people whose minds are exercised by the lofty and various thoughts of the Bible and our Christian religion will not be satisfied by bread and meat alone. They crave intellectual culture and the true development of all the faculties of man. This then is the way in which we can account for the existence of this institution. It is yet in the mere infancy—it will take time for its growth and development, but I know the spirit of the people that is interested in it, and I cannot doubt that they will stick to it, love and encourage it and make it a power of good for themselves and indirectly to the whole state.

“It is but natural that our American fellow citizens should ask us something like the following questions: “What principles do you advocate? What influence will you exert by means of this institution? You and your children expect to live among us, and we should like to know what sort of neighbors you are going to be? These and the like are legitimate questions.

“I do not here propose to discuss the various systems of education, their merits and demerits, I merely desire to state briefly *what* we expect to accomplish by means of this institution and *how* we mean to accomplish it. Our peculiar aim is to reach and educate the Swedish youths of our state. We propose to teach to that class the languages, the mathematics, history and the natural sciences; to educate them in a good Christian knowledge and morals in order that they may grow up to a true manhood; become good citizens and desirable neighbors. They are now in a transition state. Any one who has had anything to do with the education of the masses of our foreign population knows very well that they cannot be reached by means of one language alone, at least not so successfully. We propose to make use of both the Swedish and English as a medium of imparting instruction. In this way we are confident that we will be able to reach a much greater number of the Swedish population than would otherwise be possible.

"I will make the further remark that the founders of this institution and those who take an interest in it are all deeply persuaded that any system of education that does not aim at the training of man's religious and moral faculties as well as the intelligence is a failure. We are therefore decidedly in favor of keeping the Bible in this school. We desire to hold fast to the Christian and Bible view of God and the world and to shape the instruction in all the various branches of knowledge in strict conformity with such view. Some might ask, What have sciences to do with religion and morals? I answer, very much indeed in every way. You cannot take up one single study and carry it beyond the mere mechanical proficiency of memorizing and repeating the same without the necessity of connecting it with some particular view of the world and the ultimate cause of all existence. You take up the mathematics, or the natural science, astronomy, zoology, botany, minerology, or chemistry, and you find natural laws everywhere. Now the question arises: Are these natural laws the ultimate cause of the existence of nature, or is there any other cause beyond these natural laws? You take up history and you there find another kind of laws which determine the events of the world—we may call them moral laws. Is there anything beyond those laws or are the events of the world nothing but fickle fatalism, strung up like beads in a haphazard way?

"You perceive then that you are compelled to connect all your studies with a particular system of philosophy, or faith if you please, and from this there is no escape unless you want to make yourself a perfect blockhead that doesn't care to think or reason at all. But if you reason you must either adopt the Christian or Bible system and acknowledge a personal God who is the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Governor and the Judge of the universe, or, rejecting this you have nothing to fall upon but either pantheism or materialism—which—in different ways of thinking only—make the world its own self-existent originator and preserver. Now we do not hesitate to profess that we are Christians, Protestants, and evangelical Lutherans and that we will carry on the work of education in consonance with the principles that are implied in this profession."¹³

Though several attempts have been made to move the college it has remained at St. Peter. Nyquist served as president until 1881. Rev. Matthew Wahlstrom, who had been a student at St. Ansgar's Academy at Carver, and then at Augustana Seminary, was a mem-

ber of the faculty when Nyquist resigned, and he was then elected president. His desire was to make the institution a college in fact as well as in name, but several years elapsed before this could be accomplished. The first college class, numbering eight young men, was graduated in 1890. During the next 25 years, down to the time of the death of Eric Norelius, a total of 354 young men and women received their bachelor degrees at Gustavus Adolphus College. Many others were graduates of the School of Commerce and the Music department.

The last appearance of Norelius before an audience at the college was at the 50th anniversary in May, 1912, when he delivered the main address. He was then 78 years old. He had lived to see one of his *älsklingsanstalter* grow into an institution of learning that served hundreds and thousands of the youth of Minnesota and the nation.¹⁴

NOTES

¹*Ang. Synod Protokoll*, June 8-14, 1871, 26f.

²L. A. Johnston, *Minnesskrift*, 175.

³A. Thorson to Norelius, Feb. 18, 1873 (MS).

⁴*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, May 21-26, 1873, Mimeo ed., 72.

⁵*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Oct. 1-6, 1873, Mimeo ed., 79f.

⁶*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, May 27-30, 1874, Mimeo ed., 90f.

⁷J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, July 20, 1876 (MS).

⁸J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Aug. 25, 1876 (MS).

⁹P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Aug. 30, 1876; J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Sept. 6, 1876 (MSS).

¹⁰J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Sept. 19, 1876 (MS).

¹¹J. Auslund to Norelius, Sept. 21, 1876 (MS).

¹²J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Oct. 11, 1876; Oct. 18, 1876 (MSS).

¹³(MS) in Gustavus Adolphus College Archives.

¹⁴Conrad Peterson, member of the faculty of the College from 1908 to 1950 and since that time archivist of the College and of the Minnesota Conference, has written a detailed history of the College, 135 pages, published 1953 under the title "Remember Thy Past."

Chapter 26

JOURNALISTIC VENTURES

OF ALL the many projects that Norelius started none brought him less happiness than his attempts in the field of journalism. Yet it seems that he could not leave journalism alone before it led him into serious trouble with some of his best friends and, indirectly, to an attempt to suspend him from the ministry. Still it must be said that his intentions were noble, for he did not plan his publishing ventures to serve himself but to serve the interests of the Church.

The story of his earliest attempt in this field has been related in a previous chapter. *Minnesota Posten*, which lived its brief life in 1857-58, might have been a glowing success if he had had money to keep it going a few years more, just at the time the big stream of Swedish immigration began to flow into Minnesota.

His next attempt was to edit *Hemlandet* in Chicago, with which his *Posten* was merged. In less than nine months he had come to the conclusion that he was not free to edit as he pleased when he worked for a Society consisting of several men. So he quit and returned to parish work.

He stayed out of newspaper work for ten years, except for contributing rather frequent articles to Swedish papers. Then as already mentioned he became editor of *Missionären*, 1870-71, quitting after these two years because he wanted to make it the organ of the Minnesota Conference, an idea that was not approved by the Publication Society.

The result was that a new paper was started, *Luthersk Kyrkotidning*, with Norelius as editor. It continued through 1872 and 1873, after which he was persuaded to give it up and merge the paper with the Synod's *Augustana*.

But it was not long until he was at it again. And again it might be said that he was on the verge of success, if only a few things had been different. With more and more thousands of Swedes in Minnesota and throughout the Northwest the time was near when a Swedish paper could easily earn its way by means of circulation and advertising. But to make the project a success required something that Norelius did not have.

One day early in the year 1876 Norelius received a long letter from an old acquaintance of his who by this time had achieved a bit of fame. Colonel Hans Mattson had come to the conclusion that a Swedish paper in Minnesota would now be a good business proposition. Norelius was not so sure about that and frankly told Mattson how he felt. Yet Norelius said that he did not doubt Mattson's ability to edit such a paper as he had in mind and Mattson took this as a great encouragement. His intention was, he wrote to Norelius, to put out "such a paper that men like you can conscientiously introduce it to your family hearth and feel a desire to see it in every house." He stated that he did not expect official support from the clergy or the Conference, but he hoped that the paper would answer the demand for a family political paper so that the ministers of the Conference would not feel it a duty to start another paper in opposition to it."¹

In December Mattson was ready to launch his new paper. It was to be called *Minnesota Stats Tidning*, published weekly in Minneapolis. He wrote to Norelius:

"It will be my aim, as far as a political paper can do it, to court the good will of our clergy and of all other good people, by making the paper such that they shall be compelled to like it."

He asked for the annual report from the Vasa Church, promised to print the history of Vasa with a picture of the church, and gave this general invitation:

"I think you will like the plan of my paper when you see it, and of course its columns will always be open to anything appertaining to church matters, the same as the better class of American church papers."²

Minnesota Stats Tidning came out, as promised, beginning in January, 1877, and from the beginning began to reveal the marks of success. Obviously Hans Mattson was trying to fulfill the promises he had made to Norelius. For a secular paper it was edited on an unusually high level. But the pastors of the Minnesota Conference did not seem to give their co-operation. Seldom did they send any church news. The only exception was that Rev. J. P. Nyquist told of Gustavus Adolphus College, its hopes, and its needs.

But it was soon apparent that Mattson had no intention of excluding announcements of the meetings of such secular organizations as Swedish lodges and fraternal societies. However, in spite of poor co-operation by the pastors, M. S. T. gave by far more prominence to church news than to any other organization.

Norelius started another new paper, not in direct competition with Mattson, but a small, pamphlet size, semi-monthly religious paper. It was called *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidskrift*, and was published in Red Wing, beginning in December, 1877.

There were others who wanted to share in this enterprise. The company was enlarged to include Peter Sjöblom in Red Wing and Rev. A. P. Montén, pastor of First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, both of them very aggressive and individualistic men. Norelius was not happy about it but went along in the business of enlarging the paper, moving it to St. Paul, and giving it a new name—the old name that had been thought of for one of Norelius' previous journalistic children — *Skaffaren*.

Under this name the paper came out as a weekly from the office in Red Wing from December, 1878 to July 1879. Beginning in August of that year it was published in St. Paul. Norelius was editor-in-chief, Sjöblom assistant editor, and Montén general manager. Mr. Herman Stockenstrom was engaged to serve as "Office editor."

Norelius, as chief editor, had nothing to do but write three to six columns each week. Sjöblom was to clip from exchanges enough to fill a couple of pages. Montén and Stockenstrom were supposed to do the rest. Stockenstrom thought himself a poet and inflicted sentimental doggerel on the readers, especially in tribute to friends who had died. (Once, however, he merely read the poem at the funeral, then printed it as a leaflet and offered it for sale at ten cents per copy.)

Montén now launched into a systematic campaign against *Minnesota Stats Tidning*. One of the men who worked for Mattson on the M. S. T. later summarized the feud in these terms:

"Skaffaren, under the Montén regime, could not tolerate *Stats Tidning's* independent stand, or digest its increasing popularity, but slandered it again and again in the most reckless attacks against *Stats-Tidning* and its personnel. It even went so far that in one issue it published an article of between eight and nine columns in which *Stats-Tidning's* program and tendency were depicted in the darkest colors."³

The article referred to in the above quotation was published in a two page supplement, December 1, 1879. Montén said he had been accused of smearing *Stats Tidning*. In answer to that charge he set up this question, "What is *Minnesota Stats Tidning's* attitude with respect to Christianity?" and he goes into considerable

detail to prove that its attitude is wholly unchristian, and the worst of it is that it pretends to be Christian while it speaks favorably of theaters, dances, lotteries, and saloons.

After such an outburst there could be no peace until one paper or the other was eliminated. This was the plain and simple purpose of Montén and Sjöblom, as Sjöblom himself stated in the paper when it had been accomplished.

The manner in which it was done, however, proved exceedingly embarrassing. Unusually large ads began appearing in *Skaffaren* regarding land for sale in the Red River Valley, along the railroad owned by the empire builder, James J. Hill. When it became known that Montén had borrowed \$10,000 from Hill to buy out *Stats-Tidning* Sjöblom had another job on his hands besides clipping articles from his contemporaries. He had to go to bat for his friend Montén. Sjöblom sought to explain that it was purely "a business deal made by Mr. Stockenstrom after consultation with Montén." "Mr. Hill was willing to lend capital on good security." "The land ads were being paid for." "The fact that Montén also is at the head of a Swedish Colonization Bureau, what's wrong with that?"⁴

Another article in the same issue explains why *Skaffaren* is the cheapest of all Swedish papers. Both editors serve without pay.

This undoubtedly was true, but it did not help at all in making a smooth editorial policy.

As early as in April, 1880, complaints were coming to Norelius that there was too much of personal strife published abroad in the columns of the paper.⁵

In August of that year Norelius, Sjöblom, and Montén almost had a three-way falling out. When Prof. A. W. Williamson was called to Augustana College in Rock Island after serving three years at Gustavus, Norelius sent a news item to *Skaffaren* about it, with a favorable comment on Williamson. Sjöblom read it when the paper came out. He had not favored Williamson for the college position because Williamson was a Presbyterian, and he had told the Conference openly what he thought. Now he did not imagine that Norelius had written the favorable comment about Williamson, but thought Stockenstrom had done it. So he wrote a note to Stockenstrom, and that gentleman told Sjöblom he'd have to get after Norelius. So Sjöblom wrote an editorial stating his position and it was published in the following issue. Thus all the readers were aware of the difference of opinion of the two editors. Sjöblom in a letter to Norelius tried to smooth things over.

Montén was angry:

"What Pastor Sjöblom has written privately I do not know, but I know what I have written. If anyone is 'driven' away from *Skaffaren* it will be I, for I will have nothing to do with it if the editors strive with each other.

"Pastor Norelius says, 'by your behavior you have made it impossible.' What have I done? I have only said that I will have nothing to do with *Skaffaren* if you are to fight with each other in it, and that's that. I have not broken the agreement, and under no circumstances will I agree that Pastor Norelius leaves, for then you can rather take the paper and do with it whatever you want. It is and ought to be a matter of conscience to see what goes into the paper. If I suffer loss because you do not keep your agreements, then you are responsible for it."⁶

What the "agreement" was between Norelius and Montén is hinted at in a letter to Norelius from a subscriber:

"We take courage to ask questions of you because when Rev. A. P. Montén from St. Paul was here last spring he promised in a most solemn way before the altar of God that if we decided to subscribe to *Skaffaren* then Rev. E. Norelius had promised to answer questions regarding churchly matters and N. O. Werner of Red Wing on the political."⁷

Whatever else the agreement may have included it is obvious that Montén was capitalizing on Norelius' high reputation in the church. But Norelius was becoming weary of the whole business. Stockenstrom would write articles in reply to opinions expressed in other Swedish papers. He would send them to Sjöblom, and the latter would "sprinkle pepper" liberally, even though he admitted sometimes that they got into controversies with other editors which would not have been necessary.⁸

Norelius still was chief editor, and an illustration of how the other two men disregarded him is seen in a letter he wrote to a woman in Chicago. She had started a movement for the furtherance of Swedish art and literature. *Skaffaren* ran an article attacking her. She wrote to Norelius, and he could only offer the excuse that the article came from his co-editors.⁹

Sometimes Sjöblom wrote to Norelius pleading with him to write more for the paper. Again he finds that he must confess writing some article contrary to the expressed wishes of the editor-in-chief.¹⁰

Montén had cooled down and stayed with the paper, but he wished that Norelius could do more work. He urged that Norelius move to St. Paul and give full time to it, "if we only could support Norelius here."¹¹

Norelius' name appeared on the masthead as editor-in-chief until the issue of March 8, 1882. Beginning with the following issue Sjöblom's name is given as editor. No explanation is given for this change. But in the issue of March 29 announcement is made of the incorporation of "The Lutheran Publication Society of the Northwest," on March 23.¹²

Norelius was through with the paper, but he was not yet through with Rev. A. P. Montén.

Since Stockenstrom (under instructions from Montén) bought *Minnesota Stats Tidning* it had been published with him as editor. From May, 1882 to March, 1885 the two papers were published together under the combined name. From 1885 to 1895 it bore the name *Skaffaren*, then changed to *Minnesota Stats Tidning*. It became a highly successful paper as long as there were sufficient Swedish speaking people in the Northwest. The paper went out of existence in 1940. Generally speaking it had the good will of the pastors and the congregations of the Minnesota Conference after the period of strife was over.

NOTES

¹Hans Mattson to Norelius, Apr. 3, 1876 (MS).

²Hans Mattson to Norelius, Dec. 8, 1876 (MS).

³Alfred Soderstrom, *Blixtrar på Tidnings-horisonten*, 74.

⁴*Skaffaren*, Jan. 11, 1882.

⁵J. O. Cavallin to Norelius, Apr. 5, 1880 (MS); J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Apr. 12, 1880 (MS).

⁶*Skaffaren*, Aug. 18 and Aug. 25, 1880; P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Aug. 25, 1880; A. P. Montén to Norelius, Aug. 30, 1880 (MSS).

⁷Chas. Swanson, Watertown, Minn. to Norelius, Sept. 17, 1880 (MS).

⁸P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Oct. 4, 1880 (MS).

⁹Norelius to Marie Brown, Oct. 6, 1880 (MS).

¹⁰P. Sjöblom to Norelius, Oct. 7, Oct. 23, Oct. 29, Dec. 4, 1880 (MSS).

¹¹A. P. Montén to Norelius, Dec. 20, 1880.

¹²The members of the corporation were: S. E. Sanborn, Minneapolis; Berndt Anderson, Minneapolis; Andrew Barquist, Minneapolis; Herman Stockenstrom, St. Paul; Andrew P. Croonquist, St. Paul; Charles G. Zachrisson, St. Paul; Otto Wallmark, Chisago City; Andrew Peterson, St. Paul; Gustaf S. Olson, St. Paul; A. J. Carlson, East Union; A. E. Edholm, Lake City; John Peterson, St. Peter; Solomon Holcomb, Marine; Nels Thompson, Marine; John Elmquist, Marine; Andrew Olson, Stillwater; John Warner, Stillwater.

Chapter 27

STRIFE AMONG BRETHREN

THE TENSION that had been generated between Norelius, Sjöblom and Montén could not be kept within the limits of their journalistic enterprise. It was becoming more and more evident that they had different opinions and attitudes on a number of subjects, and that there was bound to be a clash whenever these prominent leaders in the Church found themselves at variance.

In 1883 a clash occurred with regard to the rehiring of a member of the faculty at Gustavus. The teacher's name was P. T. Lindholm. He served as parochial school teacher and organist in the Vasa congregation, and also as public school teacher from 1874 to 1881, and proved satisfactory to Norelius and the Church Council.¹

He was engaged to teach at Gustavus and served there until the spring of 1883. President Wahlstrom, other faculty members, and some board members wanted him to continue, but Sjöblom had decided that he was to be ousted because he lacked the necessary knowledge for such a position.²

At the Conference meeting in April the election of teacher was to take place. Before any motion was made the delegation discussed Lindholm, making it plain that they would under no conditions want him, and that anyone who dared to nominate him would take the blame for tearing the Conference to pieces. Nevertheless Wahlstrom and others worked to have Lindholm elected, but failed. C. W. Foss of Rock Island was called.³

The extent of the dissension and an indication of the degree of temperature prevailing in the Conference may be seen in a letter written to Norelius by J. G. Lagerstrom in St. Peter:

"Now the board has had its meeting and the outcome was as expected, that Lindholm was passed by. I was present only until officers were elected, and since I was not invited to stay longer I said farewell and went home. Sjöblom was elected chairman, Ternstedt secretary, and A. Thorson treasurer. When all was over Montén came to me and seemed very willing to make up and urged me to go along up to Sjöblom to seek reconciliation with him. I asked if he had requested it. When he said 'No,' I said that if he wanted a reconciliation he was welcome, but he never

came to me. I also said that I thought of giving Sjöblom an opportunity while he was here to prove his accusations before a justice of the peace. But perhaps it would be better if the Church Council asks the Conference to straighten things out so that it may know how to act towards me.

"I have been disturbed in my mind since the Conference meeting but now I am beginning to despise the whole of Sjöblom's attack. God has no doubt a punishment also for him. I intend to arrange it now so the congregation will be served by the professors at the school. Then I shall resign. Sjöblom has written to Cavallin about his victory at the Conference and how the whole line of opponents was defeated. Sjöblom had complained at the meeting here 'that Lindholm could not be called and that the Conference should be so much against him?' How long can God permit the carnal to rule our Conference?

"I hope to have opportunity to see Br. Norelius soon about my situation. Montén had said to Lindholm that he intended soon to seek a reconciliation with you."⁴

In all this Norelius was keeping quiet, to such an extent that his best friends were exasperated. When his former neighbor, Cavallin, who had moved to Moorhead, heard that Norelius even was thinking of leaving the Conference to get away from the strife he wrote his elder a rather stern letter:

"It seems dark at present . . . A break is at hand. For Norelius to leave Minnesota would almost be weakness, yes, worse than weakness. It was a day of misfortune when you sold *Skaffaren* to Montén, or when you went into company with him. That rotten affair will come out into the open some day. For the last time I tell you openly and straight-forwardly that if in the future you want to avoid being hit by the despite that will fall on those who keep silent about the truth concerning the newspaper affairs, there is for you no choice but to make an open admission immediately. It should go to the President of Synod and then be published in *Skaffaren* and *Hemlandet*. If anyone tries to leave the Conference to avoid strife then others may find it necessary to withdraw from the Conference and perhaps from the Synod."⁵

Norelius' reply to this has not been found, but much of what he said can be guessed from Cavallin's next letter.

"It hurts me that I with my churlish letter wounded you. But I am not your enemy! If there is nothing in the newspaper affair then let the subject die as far as I am concerned. I thought

that a declaration about the *true* relationship between Hill and the paper ought to be made public . . . Forgive me! I thought it would be terrible, Pastor Norelius, if you should leave us in the midst of this misery. This was the reason for my strong statements.

"I understand that certain persons have set you up as target for their poisoned arrows. I also understand that they will not spare any means to reach their mark, if it is possible . . .

"Though the cause of Christ does not depend on men it cannot be denied that certain persons are more necessary than others. To lead a church in stormy times and through fire it is necessary that leaders have the confidence of the people and enough presence of mind so they don't get confused by the noise of the enemies. If these are lacking the leader is of no use, and without a leader it is in vain to struggle — even for the truth. In our Conference there are only two persons who can be thought of as leaders now. They are Norelius and Lagerstrom. Jackson is no good for that and Frodeen is too young. If Norelius now leaves and Lagerstrom says farewell, there remains for this Conference nothing but to *seek to destroy itself*. If there is anyone who will not submit he must either move away or leave the church. I must say that I have to a large extent lost respect for a church that lets itself be so bound by rules that only if all the rules of knowledge be fulfilled a warning or punishment shall be given. Did not the president [Erland Carlsson] hear how Sjöblom attacked Lagerstrom in a manner that witnessed of a coarse ungodliness? Don't Carlsson and others know that Sjöblom is still of the same mind? Is not the Synod awake? To expect any improvement in the Minnesota Conference as long as Sjöblom and Montén rule is like expecting to harvest wheat in the Red River Valley in the middle of winter."⁶

Norelius left the Conference, but only for a few weeks, in the summer of 1883. He and his wife spent some time in Kansas, in the hope that Mrs. Norelius' health might improve. Undoubtedly his sojourn in Kansas had some connection with the fact that P. T. Lindholm soon thereafter received and accepted a call to Bethany College in Lindsborg. Norelius himself had several opportunities to stay in Kansas. He also had a call to go to San Jose, California. But he was soon back at Vasa again.

It was not long before Lindholm had found time for another occupation in addition to his teaching duties. He had unexpectedly come across something that looked like powerful ammunition to use against Montén, and immediately wrote to Norelius about it.

Montén had a brother who was an alcoholic and for several years had been under guardian in Chicago. He had improved, and was released from guardianship. Then he came to live with Pastor Montén in St. Paul. But when he announced his intention of returning to Chicago to go into business, application was made in the Probate Court in St. Paul to have Herman Stockenstrom appointed his guardian. This was approved by the court.⁷

It was in connection with this matter that Lindholm had dug up information that seemed to put Pastor Montén in a very embarrassing situation. Lindholm wrote to Norelius:

"Certain matters have come into the open concerning Montén which may serve to reveal him, or at least cause him some headaches. You will remember that his brother, Swen Montén, a few years ago was put under guardian. This happened on March 31, 1881. At that time Pastor Montén submitted a statement, under oath, that his brother owned a piece of land here [in Kansas] worth \$1,000.00. This statement was filed in the Probate office in St. Paul. Now when matters are investigated more closely it is found that A. P. Montén got a deed from Swen Montén on September 13, 1880. This deed was recorded here on April 7, 1881. A. P. Montén has since then sold the land to one Nordberg for \$1,600.00, and consequently made a profit of \$600 on his brother, in addition to the annual income from the land. Stockenstrom has turned this affair over to the hands of a lawyer in St. Paul, and A. P. will at least have opportunity to explain himself. Perhaps the apple is ripe."⁸

The news of this affair had already reached Norelius before Lindholm wrote. Stockenstrom had reported fully, and stated that the Probate Court judge had declared it "clearly a case of fraud."⁹

Norelius wrote to Cavallin at Moorhead to enlist his aid in the battle. Montén was to be accused before the Minnesota Conference for unchristian conduct. Norelius suggested the form that such an accusation might take:

"We assert and shall prove:

"I. That Pastor A. P. Montén has been guilty of intentional fraud, and has committed perjury to obtain a sum of money.

"Specifically

- a) He has sought to defraud his own brother S. J. Montén out of \$600;
- b) He has in Probate Court in St. Paul under oath made false statements.

"II. That Pastor A. P. Montén has been guilty of a manifest injustice in another business affair and still perseveres in this.

"Specifically

- a) He together with P. Sjöblom sold *Skaffaren* and *Minnesota Stats Tidning* without the third partner's approval, and shared with Pastor Sjöblom the proceeds without giving the third partner anything.
- b) He committed an injustice against Mr. O. Walin in another transaction.

"III. That Pastor A. P. Montén has been guilty of other unchristian and offensive conduct on several occasions.

- a)
- b) 10

Cavallin was willing to join up for this battle. "Thanks for the letter," he wrote. "Not at all new, only the old tricks in new form. Montén would not be so brave if that Sjöblom did not stand by him. Something must be done now even if it should mean the tearing apart of the Conference. I am willing together with Frodeen — E. Carlsson and Norelius must persuade him — to bring complaint against Montén on the following conditions: a) That a copy of the Probate Court files and a copy of Nordberg's affidavit concerning S. J. Montén's property be sent to me; b) that Norelius give me a written account of the affairs pertaining to the newspaper, . . . c) that persons be mentioned whom I can call as witnesses. The form for the complaint is in my humble opinion very good. One or another strong expression might however be deleted without causing harm. I will not write to anyone about this until I hear from you."¹¹

In October, 1883, and again in the spring of 1884, before the alleged fraud had come to light, Montén had written to Norelius asking that they might reconcile their differences and co-operate in the work once more.

To the first of these appeals Norelius replied:

"Yours of the 11th received in which you desire a settlement with me in order to restore a good relationship between us. In reply I will say that I am glad that you feel the need of a good relationship between brethren in the ministry and that you are willing to do all you can in good conscience to bring this about.

"Since it is not only I who cannot agree to your ways of dealing but also many of the brethren are in the same situation, nothing would be gained through a personal settlement with me.

"The matter is of a general nature and should therefore be settled preferably at a pastoral conference, or if you so desire, at a Conference meeting. When the matter has been settled there then it is also settled with me."¹²

Another overture came from Montén a few months later, with an offer of restitution for financial wrongs done to Norelius:

"On the 6th of February, 1884, we have a meeting of the newspaper company and I want to urge Pastor Norelius to come. If Pastor Norelius will consider the agreement that was made with Pastor Sjöblom when Pastor Norelius left the paper, as now void, I am willing to give Pastor Norelius stock for \$500.

"It looked threatening when Mr. Stockenstrom and his party left the paper, but now we find that the number of subscribers has increased by 700 and is increasing every day. The paper has a future and we need it. Come along now and let us work together in love and unity. Pastor Norelius is welcome to our home and it would be fine if you could stay until we go to the Conference meeting."¹³

This friendly offer was not prompted entirely by Montén's own feeling. A pastoral conference had been held in January, principally to discuss the paper. Norelius was not present. Lagerstrom wrote to him and reported that Montén had admitted that the paper, in order to succeed, must have the support of the pastors. The majority of them felt that Norelius was the only one who could fill the position as editor, and he should be paid enough to give his full time to it. "Otherwise *Skaffaren* will soon be in the grave."¹⁴

Norelius was officially approached about the matter of serving as editor, but he considered *Skaffaren's* future hopeless and would have nothing to do with it. (At about the same time he was offered a position as editor of a contemplated periodical in Chicago, at a salary of \$1,000 a year.)¹⁵ It was not only a question of salary, or of the offer of \$500 stock in the company. When the loan was obtained from James J. Hill to finance the purchase of *Minnesota Stats Tidning* the notes were signed by Montén, Sjöblom, and Norelius. When the new company was formed and Norelius left the paper, the understanding was that the notes should be changed, making the new owners responsible. When Stockenstrom resigned from the paper in 1883 he wrote to Norelius saying "As far as I know, Pastor Norelius' name still stands on notes for \$5,000 to Hill." Croonquist and Stockenstrom had gone to see Hill

about getting the notes changed, but "Hill only laughed, and said he did not consider it necessary." Stockenstrom said Montén himself should see Hill about it, because "if the company failed, Sjöblom has nothing, Montén most likely has his property so no one can get at it, and Norelius would be responsible for the \$5,000."¹⁶

At the pastoral conference this affair was not satisfactorily explained. Montén laid the whole blame on Stockenstrom.¹⁷

Under these circumstances Norelius stayed away from all active participation in the Conference work. His neighbor, Rev. J. Fremling, was Conference president, and he pleaded with Norelius to come and take leadership once again:

"I am convinced that if you would again accept the presidency in the Conference many difficulties would be overcome."¹⁸

Frodeen at Chisago Lake sent this plea: "O how I and many others wish that you could take a lively part with us in the activities of our beloved Church and Conference. You have the respect and confidence of us all."¹⁹

In spite of such pleas Norelius felt that principles were at stake which could not be forgotten or overlooked. Consequently when the case against Montén took the form of a lawsuit instituted against him by Stockenstrom as guardian for S. J. Montén, it seemed that it surely would mean suspension for Rev. Montén.

Montén had succeeded in enlisting the aid of Rev. Olof Olsson in Lindsborg, Kansas, who wrote articles in his defense. He also had the unanimous support of the deacons of his congregation in St. Paul. His explanation of the alleged fraud was that he had never intended to keep the profit on the land deal, but that the deed was a "deed in trust" for the benefit of his brother, and that the profit should be his. The suit was instituted in August, 1884, and Montén's first reply to the court was a denial of the allegations. However, before the case came up for trial Montén paid Stockenstrom \$400 in settlement of the claims. Then, by some strange maneuverings the lawyers for both parties (without Stockenstrom's knowledge) agreed to have the case expunged from the records.²⁰

When the Minnesota Conference met in November, 1884 no complaint was filed against Montén. At the next meeting, in February, 1885, a committee was elected to investigate the whole affair. The Minutes of the Conference state that this was done at the request of Montén himself. Herman Stockenstrom claimed that pastors in attendance at the meeting reported to him that Montén

did not ask for the investigation until the Conference had already resolved to institute an investigation.²¹

The committee's report was presented to the Conference in June, and the committee had found:

1. Montén had not committed perjury. His explanation about holding the deed in trust for his brother was accepted.

2. Montén had not defrauded his brother, but had been at all times willing to turn over the money to him.

3. Montén had acted hastily and unwisely because of lack of knowledge of civil law regarding appointment of a guardian, and also that he had not let the Court settle the case.

Stockenstrom was given a rebuke for having sued Montén out of personal ill will.²²

The Conference adopted the Committee's report exonerating Montén completely. But in the course of the discussion, Norelius made the remark that Montén was an untrustworthy man, and claimed to have sworn proof to the effect that Montén had misappropriated \$150 of Conference funds. This led to an investigation by the Conference officers in the presence of Montén and Norelius on September 24, 1885. They found that no misappropriation had taken place.

Norelius was not present when the Conference president, Rev. Fremling, reported on this investigation in February, 1886. The Conference resolved that it would be right and proper for Norelius to confess that his accusations against Montén had been made hastily and without any foundation in fact.²³

Norelius did not attend another session of the Minnesota Conference for a period of seven years, and no official apology to Montén is recorded.

Montén resigned from First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, in May, 1886, to operate a jewelry and book store in Minneapolis.²⁴

He was soon back in the active work of the ministry, serving at Superior, Wisconsin 1888-1898, and in various other parishes in Minnesota and the Dakotas until 1921.

Norelius had not succeeded in his attempts to pin anything on Montén, and the results of the whole affair were extremely painful to him. He was not equipped with the natural endowments for that sort of warfare, and his companions in the struggle were not able to help him much.

Norelius wanted to get away from Minnesota for a time and even contemplated moving to some other part of the country. He

spent seven months on the west coast, helping the pastors in their widely scattered mission fields in Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho. His family stayed in Minnesota, and he came back to his Lottie, and to Theodore and Leonard and Sigfrid, to his Vasa and his Goodhue people, and after some years, to his beloved Minnesota Conference.

And when he attended the Conference in 1893 after an absence of many years he was once again elected president.

The intramural strife among brethren, bitter as it was, had caused no serious repercussions. The Conference was not disrupted, but continued to grow. Though many undoubtedly were of the opinion that Montén had not deserved the acquittal given him by the Conference, they did not pursue the subject further. Norelius' election to the presidency in 1893 may be considered not only as a recognition of his ability and popularity, but also as a vindication.

NOTES

¹T. G. Pearson, Sec'y. of Vasa Church Council, certificate of recommendation for P. T. Lindholm, July 9, 1883 (MS).

²P. T. Lindholm to Norelius, Mar. 3, 1883 (MS).

³P. T. Lindholm to Norelius, Apr. 11, 1883 (MS).

⁴J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Apr. 12, 1883 (MS).

⁵J. O. Cavallin to Norelius, Apr. 18, 1883.

⁶J. O. Cavallin to Norelius, May 4, 1883.

⁷*Skaffaren*, Mar. 13, 1881.

⁸P. T. Lindholm to Norelius, Aug. 23, 1884 (MS).

⁹Herman Stockenstrom to Norelius, Aug. 18, 1884 (MS), GAC Archives.

¹⁰(MS) in GAC Archives. Norelius pencilled a comment at the bottom of the sheet: "Now the postman is coming so I can't finish."

¹¹J. O. Cavallin to Norelius, Aug. 23, 1884 (MS).

¹²Norelius to A. P. Montén, Oct. 17, 1883 (MS) in GAC Archives.

¹³A. P. Montén to Norelius, Feb. 1, 1884 (MS).

¹⁴J. G. Lagerstrom to Norelius, Jan. 21, 1884 (MS).

¹⁵C. O. Lindell to Norelius, Jan. 25, 1884 (MS).

¹⁶Herman Stockenstrom to Norelius, Aug. 29, 1883, Sept. 11, 1883 (MSS) in GAC Archives.

¹⁷Herman Stockenstrom to Norelius, Dec. 4, 1883 (MS) in GAC Archives.

¹⁸J. Fremling to Norelius, Jan. 17, 1884 (MS).

¹⁹J. J. Frodeen to Norelius, Mar. 17, 1884 (MS).

²⁰Herman Stockenstrom, as guardian of Swen Johan Montén, filed a document with the Probate Court on Feb. 4, 1885, stating that he refused to ratify or in any manner assent to any such withdrawal of said charges.

²¹*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 17-24, 1885; Herman Stockenstrom to Norelius, March 6, 1885 (MS) in GAC Archives.

²²*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 2-7, 1885.

²³*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, Feb. 9-15, 1886.

²⁴*Skaffaren*, May 12, 1886.

Chapter 28

WEST COAST MISSIONARY

IN ITS efforts to meet the challenge of the expanding home mission fields on the western and northern frontiers the Minnesota Conference adopted the practice of sending each and every one of its ministers on an annual "vacation" trip to the new settlements and the vacant congregations. These trips were so arranged that the neighboring pastors would not be away at the same time, but would be able to care for each other's congregations during the absence of the one who was out travelling.

In the spring of 1882 Eric Norelius was appointed to make a journey to Bismarck and other places in Dakota Territory, which at that time formed a colorful part of the wild west. Prominent among the Swedish Lutherans in Bismarck were two brothers, John and Peter Johnson. At that time they were working as sub-contractors on the Northern Pacific railroad, which was under construction in eastern Montana. They had a crew of Swedish laboring men, and Norelius was invited to come to this construction camp and hold services. He rode on the train as far as the tracks were laid, preaching to the men each evening. His pulpit consisted of an empty flour barrel with a buffalo robe thrown over it.

The exact location of the camp cannot be determined, but it was somewhere in the vicinity of Miles City. This was the first visit by any Lutheran pastor to Montana. Under the circumstances no permanent work could be established, and many more years elapsed before any Augustana congregations were organized in Montana.¹

Soon after his return home from this mission journey Norelius was called to serve the Spring Garden Lutheran Church, eight miles from his home. In spite of poor health, and in spite of other calls to more southerly regions he chose to remain in Minnesota. He accepted the call to Spring Garden and served the congregation for a period of two years, 1882 to 1884.²

These were years of comparative quiet for Norelius, as he had no official duties, and had withdrawn from the editorship of *Skaffaren*. Owing to his poor health he stayed at home much of the

time, engrossed in writing something which he was not yet ready to reveal.³

Calls came to him during this time from Brushy, Texas; Round Rock, Texas; New Gottland, Kansas; and from the Board of Missions to serve at San Jose, California. He stayed in Minnesota. But his old friend Passavant wrote and expressed his opinion as to what Norelius ought to be doing:

"I'm glad to hear that you are well enough to take care of a congregation, but I am sorry that you whom the Lord has entrusted with such organizing abilities are obliged to *sit down* and work in one place. It is all well to labor *anywhere for Christ*, but how much could not be accomplished for our church in our Northwest if you could be employed, say on the Northern Pacific Railroad, to superintend the mission field from Puget Sound to Bismarck. This is what the Church needs."⁴

One may say with a fair degree of certainty that the suggestion made by Passavant met with favor in the mind and heart of Norelius. To travel and to visit new places where Swedes had settled and where new congregations might be established, this was the kind of work Norelius enjoyed, though he well knew the hardships and the discouragements involved in such work. His years of experience as a parish pastor, as travelling missionary, and as chairman of the Synod's Board of Missions had impressed on him deeply the need of a more intensive home mission program.

In the summer of 1885, when the controversy between him and Montén had raised the temperature in the Minnesota Conference to uncomfortable heights he had an added reason for going on an extended home mission journey. His old friend, Peter Carlson of East Union, had gone west in 1879, and he gladly welcomed Norelius as assistant. Cavallin also urged Norelius to take time out from the conflict in Minnesota.⁵

Leaving home on October 1, 1885, his first visit was to Moorhead, Minnesota, where his friend and former neighbor, Rev. Cavallin, was stationed. After preaching for him on the 4th, he took the train for Oregon. The trip from Moorhead to Portland took three days. It was his first journey through the Rocky Mountain region and the majestic snow-capped ranges, the towering peaks, the scenic valleys made a tremendous impression on him. His diary of the trip reveals his interest in the ever-changing scenes: "Today I surely have a feast for the eyes. Always new scenes." "What a grand sight ahead of us, up the river! Peaks, snow-capped. Now I

see that these are on the south side. A little river comes in here from the southwest. It surely is a glorious view up the river." "Now we started climbing the main range of the Rocky Mountains. I stood on the platform until we reached the summit, and started going down on the other side. Too bad that we have to go to bed now, for it would have been worth a great deal to see the western slope of the divide and the Deer Lodge valley."

Thus he kept notes on the nature of the region through which he passed, always on the alert for good farming country where Swedish settlers might form colonies.

1885
Portland
The train reached East Portland in the morning of October 8. From there the passengers went on a steamer across the Willamette River to Portland. Norelius was met at the dock by Rev. J. W. Skans, pastor of the little Immanuel Lutheran congregation which had been organized in 1879 by the Augustana Synod's pioneer home missionary on the north Pacific coast, Peter Carlson, who previously had given 21 years to pioneering in Carver County, Minnesota.

Rev. L. O. Lindh of La Conner, Washington and Rev. Jacob Hoikka of Astoria, Oregon arrived at the Skans home the same day for consultations with Norelius about the home mission prospects on the coast. At a service in the evening Norelius preached on a portion of the 16th chapter of The Acts, the story of Lydia's conversion, his theme being "the outward and the inward progress of the kingdom of God."

On the following days the pastors explored the city and took in the fair and also a Chinese religious festival in a joss house. This building had several stories. The first story had two idol rooms, containing a number of idols, some painted, some in the form of statues, set up with pictures, placards, and tinsel. On a large altar stood some incense burners. The rooms were full of Chinese people who talked, laughed, and smoked as they went about looking at the idols. The second story of the house also contained a number of idols.

Amid burning incense strains of weird music floated forth from a dark balcony in a corner. Three priests, elaborately dressed in red gowns and black caps, five choir boys, and a few musicians went through a long, involved ritual of worship at the various altars, which reached its climax in a procession from altar to altar at a faster and faster pace until it seemed that everything would go up in smoke. The onlookers, Chinese as well as white people, laughed, talked, and smoked during the ceremony.

After witnessing this display of a heathen religion Norelius wrote this comment in his diary: "O God, how low man can sink. But is the heathenism of the white, civilized people any better, in the last analysis, than that of these Asiatic heathen?"

Norelius stayed in Portland a week, preaching several times and speaking to the young people's society of the congregation. Leaving Portland on the 16th he went to Tacoma, where Rev. G. A. Anderson was pastor of the Swedish Lutheran congregation. A church had been built in 1883, seating 250 or 300 people. Norelius spoke to the congregation on several occasions. On the 21st Anderson and Norelius went by boat to Seattle, where a congregation had been organized and stood under Anderson's leadership.

Norelius decided to stay in Seattle over three Sundays. He found room and board at the home of a Norwegian woman, Mrs. Alstad, living near Union Lake. On the evening of October 23 he preached for the first time in Seattle to about a dozen people. It seemed to Norelius that the prospects for the Swedish Lutheran Church in Seattle were hopeless. He found that there were many Swedish people but the majority he found to be "wholly indifferent to all spiritual and churchly matters, and many of them antagonistic to all religion and especially to our church."

The church was a mile from the rooming place, and Norelius found it dismal and discouraging when he walked home after evening services, at which he had to serve as janitor, preacher, and song leader, and scarcely a soul would stop to talk with him after services. No one came to visit him at his rooming place. No one asked him to stay. He felt that Seattle was one of the most disagreeable places he had ever seen.

On November 8, his last Sunday in Seattle he preached three times. At the morning service he had an audience of 12 or 15 people. At communion service in the afternoon six women and two men came to the Lord's table. When he came to church in the evening he sensed that the enemies of the congregation were planning to disrupt the service. Young people plagued him with jeers and laughter. But he announced a hymn, led in singing, read Scripture and proceeded to preach. One after another got up and left while Norelius spoke.

After a night in a hotel infested with bed-bugs Norelius left for Tacoma, with a feeling of satisfaction that he had been able to give a testimony for the Lord, but sad at heart that there had been so little evidence of any fruit.

He spoke at a Reformation service in Tacoma, then went on to Portland and spoke at a similar service there.

Peter Carlson and other pastors from the coast area had arrived for a special business meeting of the district, where plans were made for the furtherance of the home mission work.

An interesting journey that took three days brought Norelius and Peter Carlson to Marshfield. The first lap was by train to Draines, a little village 150 miles south of Portland, then, the next day by stage 36 miles to Scottsburg. The passengers all had to help occasionally to clear fallen trees from the road. After a night in Scottsburg they went by steamer 20 miles down the river, and then another steamer on the bay down to the ocean, and here Norelius had his first thrilling view of the Pacific, with the breakers roaring continually.

Taken to shore in a small boat they went on board another stagecoach, which took them along the beach, just at the edge of the waves, a distance of 20 miles. Reaching Coos Bay they were taken in a rowboat a mile and a half to Empire City where they spent the night. The following day they went on a steamer ten miles to Marshfield. At this place several hundred Finland Swedes had settled and Norelius expressed his opinion that it was the most promising place on the coast for the Swedish Lutheran Church. This was where Rev. Hoikka had served, but he had resigned and moved east just after Norelius came out to Portland. A new pastor, G. M. Ryden, had just arrived.

On November 22 Carlson and Norelius conducted services including dedication of the newly built church and installation of Rev. Ryden.

Norelius and Carlson left on the steamer "Coos Bay" on the 26th bound for San Francisco. He soon found, when he sat down to his first meal on board that the mouthfuls started to get too big, and he had to go and "call Ulrik", (in Swedish a humorous remark indicating the act of throwing up.) The seasickness lasted all through the three days to San Francisco.

Norelius preached twice in the Swedish Lutheran Church on the 29th, and felt greatly encouraged over the good beginning that had been made in San Francisco under the leadership of Rev. John Telleen. The first Augustana Synod missionary in San Francisco was Jonas Auslund, who spent a few months there in 1875, but no congregation was organized until in 1882.

Telleen was contemplating moving to Illinois, and he urged

Norelius to consider a call to San Francisco. Norelius, however, felt that this would be impossible, because of the condition of his health and also because he felt that his family would not be willing to move.

On December 4th Norelius went to San Jose, preached the following Sunday, but soon found his health beginning to fail. He had also heard from home that his wife had been ill. News reached him also that some of the people in the Minnesota Conference were plotting against him. At the same time he received a call from the Synod's Board of Missions to serve as Mission Superintendent on the west coast. He was not entirely happy over this official recognition of his work, but felt nevertheless that he should accept for a time. Though burdened by sickness and by anxieties he stayed in San Jose six weeks, until the arrival of Rev. F. A. Linder. Most of the people seemed indifferent. Some of the congregation's business deals had become involved in difficulty and had to be straightened out. Christmas was a busy season but he felt lonesome far away from home and loved ones. In spite of beautiful weather almost every day Norelius felt physically and mentally depressed. He left San Jose with few pleasant memories.

Returning on January 18 he met Rev. Linder who was on his way to San Jose — delayed three days because his train had been snowbound in Iowa — and also Peter Carlson, who had been in Sacramento. They discussed the home mission prospects in California, and during the next few days Norelius in company with Telleen visited San Rafael, Oakland, Alcatraz, Santa Cruz, Monte-rey, and other places.

Taking the advice of a doctor Norelius went to Paraiso Springs to take baths and to drink the hot sulphur and soda water. From February 4 to 11 he enjoyed a restful vacation at Paraiso, after which he returned to San Francisco and the usual round of preaching, visiting, travelling, looking for Swedish people. Between February 15 and 18, he visited Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Ukiah, and had intended to go to the Anderson valley but no stage was available. On the 19th he went to Sacramento to visit Carlson. After a few days with him he went on to Marysville, Yuba City, and Sutter Station. At the latter place he found several Swedish families, and on his return to Sacramento he and Carlson discussed the possibility of getting a student for Sacramento and Sutter Station.

After further visits in and around San Francisco Norelius left for Oregon on March 14. He could not escape the misery of sea-

sickness, but this time it was only a two-day voyage to Astoria. Having preached several times in the church in Astoria he proceeded to Portland on the 23rd, and after a week with Rev. Skans in his parish he decided to undertake a journey to Moscow, Idaho. Here a little congregation had been organized, but no church had been built. Norelius held services in a Presbyterian church.

Peter Carlson had bought land near Moscow, and his family lived there while he attended to his widespread mission field.

Norelius now found, as he trudged about to the homes of the settlers, that it reminded him of his early days in Minnesota, but he found the land "almost more hilly than it is in Vasa." Though he felt that it would be hard to go through the pioneer life again he thought he could do it if necessary. Many of the settlers around Moscow were former Minnesota people, and Norelius felt at home among them.

Leaving these friends on April 14 Norelius returned to Portland, making several stops and some side trips along the way. On the 19th he led in the organizing of the Swedish Lutheran congregation in Walby, Morrow county, Oregon. He arrived in Portland on the 22nd, the day before Good Friday, and stayed there over Easter, speaking in the church several times.

Rev. Lindh, after a visit to Nehalem, took Norelius with him home to La Conner, Washington, where he spent a few days, returning to Portland on the 30th. During the next few days all the pastors on the west coast mission field met in Portland to consider and to decide on plans for their future activities. The reports showed that the Augustana Synod now had 17 congregations, ten churches, and two parsonages in its west coast mission district.

Norelius left for home on May 4, having company with Peter Carlson as far as Wallula Junction. There, at 3 a.m. Norelius was able to get into the immigrant sleeping car, got his bed, fixed up his mattress which was filled with shavings, and with one coat for a pillow and another for a covering he slept a few hours.

After enjoying the scenery again on his return trip he reached home on May 9th. His son Theodore, who a few months previously had been admitted to the bar, met him in St. Paul. In the evening he reached Red Wing, and was soon home in Vasa, with his family.

The Vasa congregation was vacant, Rev. Swärd having moved to St. Paul. Norelius was called to his old parish once again, and accepted the call.

In June the Synod met in Minneapolis, and Norelius was there to give a report of his work on the west coast. But instead of praise for his arduous missionary journey, a resolution was put through the Synod censuring the Board of Missions for calling Norelius to serve as "Mission Superintendent." A certain group of men, whom Norelius characterized as "little popes" pretended to see a danger in that designation, an implication of episcopal authority.⁶

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NOTES

¹Norelius, *Historia*, II, 112f.; Johnson, "The Beginnings of Swedish Lutheran Church Work in Montana," *Augustana Quarterly*, July, 1938.

²*Spring Garden Lutheran Church 75th Anniversary*, 21; C. A. Swensson to Norelius, June 10, 1882 (MS).

³J. Fremling to Norelius, Jan. 17, 1884 (MS).

⁴W. A. Passavant to Norelius, Sept. 8, 1883 (MS).

⁵Peter Carlson to Norelius, July 16, 1885; J. O. Cavallin to Norelius, July 22, 1885 (MSS) in GAC Archives.

⁶"Memoirs of Eric Norelius" in *The Lutheran Companion*, December 9, 1933—March 24, 1934; *Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1886.

Chapter 29

HISTORIAN OF THE CHURCH

EVER since the day when he set out from home as an emigrant boy Eric Norelius had been aware of the fact that he was taking part in events of historic importance. On the voyage to America he kept notes of events day after day. Some time during his first year in America he bought a record book and wrote in it the account of his life up to that time, and then continued to keep a diary. This book, which he called "En Minnesbok" has been preserved and is in the Augustana archives at Rock Island, Illinois. The letters he received from friends and acquaintances were carefully saved, and became the basis for later historical work by Norelius. On his home mission journeys he usually kept a record of places visited, the people he met, the services he conducted, and historical data concerning the Swedes, particularly the story of the earliest settlers in every new colony.

Some of these accounts were published, either in the periodicals edited by him or in other Swedish papers, notably in *Hemlandet*.

The first official request to gather historical material came in 1866 when the Augustana Synod elected Norelius chairman of a committee established for this purpose. The other members were O. J. Hatlestad, Jonas Swensson, O. Andrewson, and Wm. Kopp.¹

The first report of this committee, given in 1869, stated that some material had been gathered. Norelius had urged the Swedish Lutheran pastors to write historical data concerning their respective settlements, including description of the land, names of early settlers and what part of Sweden they had come from, events leading up to organization of the congregation, etc. Several had responded, and some of their manuscripts are extant in the Augustana Archives.

The historical committee in 1869 recommended that one or more historians be elected by the Synod. Norelius was elected, but no financial support was offered. But it was well known that Norelius was already writing. Hasselquist in a letter to Dr. Peter Wieselgren in Sweden made reference to it in these words:

"I shall try here to bring about a 'Welcome' which could meet the emigrants in New York or in Chicago or on the way. Norelius,

who because of his chest illness is unable to preach, but who is able to and wants to write, will, I hope take the duty of authorship."²

The "Welcome" referred to in this letter was the first history of the Augustana Synod, written by Norelius and published in Lund, Sweden, in 1870. As a history it has no great value, for it was rather an invitation to Swedish immigrants to affiliate with the Augustana congregations. Both the Illinois and Minnesota Conferences gave their moral support, and some little financial support, to the project.³

Norelius became a popular speaker at church anniversaries, the first one on record being the tenth anniversary of the Synod in 1870. His address at the 25th anniversary of the Minnesota Conference in 1883 at Chisago Lake, was a detailed account of the beginnings of Swedish settlement in Minnesota, and of the events connected with the organization of the Conference. This address, together with one given by him at the 40th anniversary of the Conference in 1898 were later published in one volume.⁴

The recurring periods of illness gave him weeks and months for writing. In 1872 his friends had despaired of his life. "It seems that the Lord will soon call Norelius home, according to sorrowful news from Minnesota . . . and if the beloved Norelius is taken from us now, I hardly know what we shall do," wrote Hasselquist to a friend in Sweden.⁵

But Norelius was not yet called to his eternal home. He survived and kept on writing. A decade later his friends knew that he was busy writing, but what his project was they could only guess. "If I had time I would go over to Spring Garden to see what Norelius is writing, but I suppose no one will see that yet," wrote his neighbor, Rev. Fremling.⁶

A group in Chicago was interested in publishing the historical writings of Norelius as a series of articles in a contemplated periodical. It was suggested that he be the editor of this new paper. "Norelius should spend the rest of his life in literary work."⁷

Another offer came from Rock Island in a letter signed only "Carl:"

"We have heard that Uncle has the history of the Synod in manuscript. Is it true? And can it come out in the jubilee year? I think our Concern is willing to publish it in fine and elegant form and on terms that will be to Uncle's advantage. I wish Uncle would tell me personally something about it."⁸

Several years elapsed before the history was published. It

appeared in 1890, a volume of 871 pages, containing some 365,000 words, entitled "De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnes Historia i Amerika" (The History of the Swedish Lutheran Congregations and of the Swedes in America). Augustana Book Concern, which had become the publication house of the church in 1889, printed the volume. There is no mention of it in any of the official reports submitted to Synod, except that the statistical report of the Book Concern in 1891 shows that Norelius' "Historia" had been published on November 21, 1890, in an edition of 800 copies.

The book covered the early period only, prior to 1860, the year in which the Augustana Synod was organized. Norelius did not include the story of the Delaware Swedes of the 17th century. He traced the beginnings of the Swedish immigration of the first half of the 19th century in considerable detail, including such groups as the Erik Jansonists who settled at Bishop Hill, Illinois. Then he devoted a chapter to each of the main settlements that had their beginnings in the 1850's: Settlements in Iowa; Andover and Berlin (Swedona) Illinois; Galesburg and Knoxville, Illinois; Moline, Rock Island, and Geneseo, Illinois; Chicago; St. Charles, Geneva, and DeKalb, Illinois; Princeton, Illinois; settlements in Indiana; Jamestown, New York, and Sugar Grove (Hessel Valley) Pennsylvania; Chisago Lake, Minnesota; Marine, St. Paul, Taylors Falls, and Rusheby, Minnesota; Vasa and Red Wing, Minnesota, and Stockholm, Wisconsin; Spring Garden, Cannon River, and Cannon Falls, Minnesota; the Union settlement, and Götaholm, and Scandia, (Carver County) Minnesota; St. Peter and Scandian Grove, Minnesota; Vista, Waseca County, Minnesota; and a chapter summarizing the information about several other small settlements in nine different states.

The last four chapters of the book contain a review of the situation in the Lutheran Church in America when the Swedes first came into contact with it; the story of the Scandinavians' experiences in the Synod of Northern Illinois; the story of the conferences during the same period; and the Swedish press and literature before 1860.

Included in the above chapters are biographies of seventeen pioneer pastors and one layman of the Augustana Synod. The information was furnished largely by the men themselves at Norelius' request. The longest one, however, consisting of 95 pages, was reprinted from a book published in Sweden. It is the biography

of O. C. T. Andrén, who stayed in America only four years, 1856-60. This seems a bit strange when one finds that Esbjörn's life story is told in 13 pages and Hasselquist's in five. Norelius nevertheless considered Andrén's contribution to the work of the Swedish Lutheran churches in America of sufficient importance to merit almost one-eighth of the space in his history. The one layman whose life was depicted was A. R. Cervin.

There is no biography of Norelius himself. At the end of the book he said: "A brief sketch of the author should have appeared here, to complete the plan of the book, which was to give some information about those who took part in the church activities before 1860; but since he has been obliged to tell about himself in so many places, due to the fact that he was along, it is just as well to leave it at that."

To a very large extent Norelius could write from personal experiences and observation. As further source material he had a great number of letters, many of which are quoted in the book. He had access to official records of congregations, conferences, and synods, and to the Swedish and American newspapers.

Considering that Norelius had been an active participant in many of the events, some of which were of controversial nature, he wrote objectively and with true historical perspective. Present day students using his book might wish that Norelius had given more information about the relationship between the Swedes and their American environment, but this aspect is hardly ever mentioned, except as it pertains to the hardships of pioneer life.

In recognition of the great contribution Norelius had made to the Church Augustana College and Theological Seminary honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1892. The following year he attended Synod for the first time since 1888. Illness had kept him from active work most of the time, and in 1891 the President of Synod, Rev. S. P. A. Lindahl, in his annual report, made reference to Norelius in these words of despair:

"We look towards . . . Vasa where Pastor E. Norelius sits with broken health, and their workday seems to be almost ended. We rejoice that we still have these fathers among us, but their strong participation in the work belongs to that which has been."⁹

In 1893 Lindahl as chairman of the Board of Augustana Book Concern reported that further attention was being given to the gathering and publishing of historical materials:

"The Board has purchased all of Dr. Hasselquist's letters and

papers. This valuable collection has been turned over to Dr. E. Norelius to look it over and arrange it. Dr. Norelius has also been engaged to write a complete biography of Dr. Hasselquist . . .

"Under special contract Synod owns the copyright of the part of Norelius' 'History' already published . . . The publication of this valuable work has so far not brought sufficient encouragement either to the writer or the publisher. Synod should see to it that the work does not stop, but continues, so that the second volume comes out as soon as possible. We are of the opinion that Dr. Norelius should receive due compensation for the work already done and that he be assured of adequate support for publication of the second part, so that his historical work will be complete . . ." In reply to this the Synod resolved to plead with and urge Norelius to continue his work, and that the Book Concern Board should make the best possible arrangements with him.¹⁰

Hasselquist had died on February 4, 1891. Norelius wrote his biography, a volume of 338 pages. It was published by Augustana Book Concern (no publication date given).¹¹

Norelius was the historian of the Synod throughout the remainder of his life. For a time he edited a quarterly magazine "Tidskrift," published by Augustana Book Concern. In 1899 the entire contents of this periodical consisted of source material on the history of the Synod, such as Minutes of the Illinois and Minnesota Conferences, letters written by Esbjörn, various other letters and documents.

The second volume of his history of the Synod did not appear until in 1916, the year after Norelius died. It had 527 pages, approximately 190,000 words. It was based largely on the minutes of the Synod, its conferences, and institutions, and to some extent on Norelius' memory. It does not measure up to the first volume in historical value or interest. However, the two volumes constitute the most complete record yet written covering the history of Swedish Lutheranism in America to the year 1915. As such this is unquestionably one of the greatest contributions that Norelius made to the Church.

In addition to his own work as historian Norelius also made an indirect contribution to the preservation of the Synod's historical material, through his influence on a young man named Claude W. Foss, a member of Norelius' little congregation at Goodhue. In 1883 Foss became a teacher in the history department at Augustana College. From the first he had been entrusted with the care of the

historical collections in the college museum, and he became greatly interested in the Swedish-American newspapers, which had been gathered by Dr. Hasselquist.

After the new college building was completed in 1889 Dr. Foss carried on as unofficial archivist on a volunteer basis. (Professor C. M. Esbjörn had been elected archivist in 1886 but resigned as teacher at the college in 1889).

The collection increased year by year. Dr. Hasselquist and Dr. Foss saw to it that all printed minutes of the Synod and of the conferences, as well as all printed histories of congregations, institutions, etc., pamphlets and circulars issued by Boards or individuals, constitutions, church periodicals, theological textbooks of the Synod; and in short, any printed material which had to do with the Augustana Church or with Swedish American immigration and the immigrants, was carefully preserved. In 1912 the collection was moved to the newly completed Denkmann Memorial Library. Dr. Foss retired in 1932 and died in 1935.¹²

NOTES

¹*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 15, 1866.

²T. N. Hasselquist to P. Wieselgren, Apr. 1, 1869, in Westin, *Emigranterna och Kykran*, 225.

³*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, June 10-14, 1869, Mimeo ed., 12; G. Peters to Norelius, May 10, 1870 (MS).

⁴Norelius, *Minnen of Minn. Konf. 25 och 40 Års Fester*, Rock Island, 1898. 46 pages.

⁵T. N. Hasselquist to P. A. Ahlberg, Apr. 28, 1872, in Westin, *Emigranterna och Kyrkan*, 337.

⁶J. Fremling to Norelius, Jan. 17, 1884 (MS).

⁷C. O. Lindell to Norelius, Jan. 25, 1884 (MS).

⁸"Carl" to Norelius, 1884 (MS). Evidently Carl P. Rydholm, one of the founders of the private stock company, "Augustana Book Concern," which was established 1884, the forerunner of the present Church-owned institution. The "jubilee year" has reference to the Synod's 25th anniversary in 1885.

⁹*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 16-23, 1891, 21f.

¹⁰*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 12-18, 1893, 60, 66.

¹¹O. F. Ander, in the bibliography of his scholarly work on T. N. Hasselquist, characterizes Norelius' biography in these words: "This biography is valuable because of the documentary material cited at length. It is, however, written in a spirit of pietism, and can be described as an apology or an attempt on the part of the writer to explain his relationship to Hasselquist."

¹²I. O. Nothstein, *The Augustana Archives*, Mimeographed.

Chapter 30

FORMULATING CHURCH POLITY

CONSTITUTIONS are hammered out on the anvil of discussion and debate in private gatherings, committee meetings, and official conventions. It would be necessary to have a complete transcript of all such discussions to determine fully what each individual has contributed.

If such a complete record were available for the Augustana Lutheran Church since its beginning, one would find that Eric Norelius had made a large contribution throughout the first fifty years. A mere listing of the constitution committees on which he served is evidence of the role he played in the development of the church polity of the Synod, its conferences, and institutions.

He was a member of the constitution committee for the organization of the Minnesota Conference in 1858, and for the revision of the constitution of the Conference in 1871. He was chairman of the committee to formulate the constitution for St. Ansgar's Academy in 1863, and was also chairman of the constitution committee for Gustavus Adolphus College in 1874. He was a member of the committee that formulated the first rules for the Augustana Pension and Aid Fund in 1867, and when the rules were adopted in 1868 it was reported that he had done most of the work for the committee. In 1869 he was chosen to serve on a committee to write the form of pastoral call to be issued by congregations. The same year he also served as a member of the committee that proposed a revision of the constitution of Augustana College and Theological Seminary. In 1870 he was chairman of a committee of the Synod that presented new regulations for management of home missions. The same year a committee which had been authorized to present a revised constitution for congregations reported that they had considered nine different proposals and they submitted the one published by Norelius in *Augustana*, which was adopted.

In 1871 he was elected as a member of a committee to bring in suggested revisions of the Synod's constitution. More than twenty years elapsed before definite action was taken on a constitution for the Synod. Norelius served on the committees at various times throughout these years.¹

It may seem paradoxical but it is nevertheless true that the reason why Norelius was able to make a fundamental contribution to the church's polity was that he did not think of polity as fundamental in the church's life. He who would study the story of the development of the polity of the Augustana Lutheran Church will find that the basic principles which are taken for granted today were clearly enunciated by Norelius. He frequently wrote on the subject for the church papers. A comprehensive statement of his understanding of the principles of church polity was published in 1870, at a time when both Synod and Conferences were preparing for revision of their respective constitutions. The article clearly shows that Norelius advocated synodical organization, but not concentration of power in the hands of the clergy, or of any small group of individuals. He had great confidence in the application of democratic processes in church government, and considered the American principle of separation of church and state as being nearest to the ideal for the true freedom and development of the church.

Because it reveals something of the scholarliness and the thoroughness of Norelius in his study of practical church questions, and also because of the fundamental principles involved, which have been accepted as basic for the Synod's polity, the article is given herewith:

"As we are about to revise our several constitutions, and since it is intended that this question is to come up for consideration at the next Synod, it may be necessary to bring it to the attention of our congregations and pastors in this way, in order that one may more thoroughly weigh the matter and come to the Synod prepared to take the steps that are required in regard to this matter. The committee that has charge of it will hardly be able to get together before the Synod meets, to prepare a proposal. It also seems that the Norwegians do not intend to have anything to do with the revision decided on by Synod, since, according to *Den Norske Lutheranen*, the Norwegian section, at its meeting in Racine, was to consider, among other things, its own proposal for a constitution. In order not to come to the next Synod and be forced to confess that nothing has been done, the writer has taken the liberty to present a proposal for changes in the constitution now in effect, and submits them for examination by other members of the committee as well as other pastors and congregations. But before I present these proposals it may be well to say something about the

principle that forms the basis for them and thus at the same time mention something about the polity of the Lutheran Church in general.

"With regard to church polity we wish to say in the first place that *the Holy Scriptures do not prescribe any particular form that is essential for the external government of the church; they only contain the general bases for the polity of the church.* Church polity, therefore, is not a matter that has to do with salvation, but nevertheless is a question of great importance for the Church's welfare and development. These general principles of the Holy Scriptures are understood quite differently, and the result is that there are also many different forms of polity, as papacy (papal rule), caesare-papacy (state-church), episcopal, presbyterian, synodical, congregational or independent polity, not to mention individualism (the individual doing as he likes). History shows plainly that it cannot be said that the church thrives equally well under any one of these forms, and therefore it is not an immaterial question how one understands and applies the general principles of polity.

"Our Evangelical Lutheran Church has in her confessions understood and stated these general Scriptural principles of polity as follows: 1. Christ is the only Head and Bishop of the Church. 2. The Church is the communion of the saints, a spiritual communion, not an external political union. The priesthood of believers is therefore the foundation for participation in the Church's activity. 3. A special priesthood (the pastoral office), distinct from the general, is necessary. 4. The governing of the Church belongs to the pastors and laymen together. 5. The religious and the secular power must not be combined.

"In Europe where the Lutheran Church everywhere has been a captive of the state, these principles of polity have not been allowed to function and become realized in actual form; on the contrary, it has been necessary there to act directly in opposition to most of them. The polity of the Church has more or less been determined by each country's political forms. The Church has indeed not thereby been suffocated completely but she has been seriously crippled and weakened. She would have been in better health if she could have given herself a polity corresponding to the free and refreshing spirit of her glorious confession. Here in America the church is free from state control, she legislates for herself and can therefore give herself the most completely apostolic polity that she desires. But we are not therefore free from the dangers of error. If the

church in Europe suffered from monarchism and the power of the few, she has in America a dangerous foe in independentism and individualism, or, in other words, in the self-will which destroys the spirit of unity and proclaims the principle of false liberty: 'Let each one do as he himself desires.'

"One must admit that there have been and still are, in our Synod, different opinions in regard to principles of polity and therefore our polity has been somewhat faltering; not so seldom one has found a contradiction between the letter of the law and its practical application. This has not always been a result of lack of clarity or of lack of knowledge about the principles derived from the Lutheran Church's confessions, but rather a result of really different ideas about the question of polity. While the Swedish part of the Synod has wanted to concentrate the churchly authority in the Synod, or in a strong synodical council, it seems that the Norwegian part, with few exceptions, has desired the dispersion of the authority, or that the Synod should be only an advisory body. It has astonished me that in general there has been among the Norwegian Lutherans in America a leaning towards the congregational type of church polity. Where they have obtained this viewpoint is hard to say. They certainly have not got it from Norway, for if I understand matters correctly the individual congregation there has no power such as they want to assign to it here, not even the right to call. I have therefore tried to explain this as a strong reaction. Since the individual congregation in Norway had next to no power at all, the tendency here in America has been that they, seeing the injustice of that situation, gave the congregation all power, and thereby they have gone almost to the other extreme. There are, however, other Lutheran bodies in America that lean towards the congregational form of polity, as the Missouri Synod, the General Synod, and the Joint Synod of Ohio, etc. We have therefore, within the Lutheran Church in America, two tendencies with respect to the question of polity namely a *synodical* and a *congregational*. Now we do not insist that those synods which cherish the one viewpoint are therefore more purely Lutheran in their teaching than those that hold to the other, but when we say this we have not said that one form of polity is just as advantageous as the other, nor that it will work to let both govern in the same Synod.

"If we now set up the two principles alongside of each other they read as follows in bare outline:

"The first: All churchly power rests with the individual congregation and can be exercised only by the individual congregation.

"The second: All churchly power rests with the individual congregation but can be exercised through representation.

"Both correspond in this that the churchly power rests in the individual congregation; but they depart from each other in the matter of how the power is exercised. According to the former each congregation formulates and executes its own laws; according to the latter the congregations through their delegates can together formulate and execute the laws for their church body. The difference between the two, therefore, has to do with the rights of delegates. According to the former the right of delegation is taken away from the individual congregation; according to the latter this right is granted and defended. The conclusions one may draw from this are the following: If the former principle is followed logically to the end it leads to individualism; but the synods that have held to this principle have not strictly followed it through, nor can they. According to this principle, strictly adhered to, a congregation would not even be able to call a pastor, since that office belongs to all equally, and by delegation is given to one certain person. They who defend this principle act in self-contradiction therefore when they grant the right to individual members of the congregation to delegate the pastoral office to one certain person. If one has in this case granted the right to delegate, it is difficult to see where the limits of this power can be set.

"Further: According to this principle the individual congregation is placed by itself without any external, organic connection with the other congregations in the church body, which, however, have the same faith and confession. The minister who holds the pastoral office in the congregation is a minister only within that congregation; as soon as he goes outside the borders of that congregation he has lost his ministerial position. In other words: he belongs only to the local congregation, not to the church body. All churchly power rests in the individual congregation and can be exercised only by it; therefore only the individual congregation can call but not the Synod. Consequently the Synod can not call or send out anyone as a travelling missionary! That any similarity in polity, worship, and ceremonies, which in many ways is desirable, is impossible where this principle is applied, is clear to everyone, since each congregation formulates and executes its own laws. But could not this variety of differences in externals also lead to

differences in doctrine and confession? Those who defend this tendency lay great stress on the fact that all questions are to be decided by God's Word and not by majority decision. This truly sounds very beautiful, but how much does it amount to in reality? Suppose one has an important problem to solve. Instead of leaving the decision to a majority in the Synod, consisting of the pastors and lay delegates, and where one has reason to expect that the greatest wisdom of the congregations is concentrated, it is turned over to a few well-known theologians to decide. And what is the result? Just this, that the power is placed in the hands of the pastors, or worse yet, in the hands of a few pastors. Tell me now: Is it more likely that a few theologians decide a matter more in accordance with the Word of God than that a whole Synod does so? Or, in other words, does a minority, as a rule, decide more in accordance with God's Word than a majority?

"I said that the aforementioned principle, if applied consistently, would lead to individualism (as one finds the situation, e. g., with the Quakers), and dissolution, and one finds that to prevent this the synods that hold to this principle are compelled to introduce such agencies as will establish the power of the clergy, whether it be called 'ministerial conference, church council, theological courts,' or whatever the name may be. They consist either of pastors alone or are so organized that the pastors have the power in their own hands. The synods are only consultative and advisory bodies, where they talk grandly about the power of the congregations and of the laymen; but when any matter of importance comes up it is well known that after they have discussed it freely they are to refer it to the ministerial conference, church council, theological faculty, or whatever the agency may be called which is the real power in the church body. What then becomes of the principle: All power rests in the individual congregation and can be exercised only by it?

"The other principle, on the other hand, grants the right of delegation, not as a sham but as a reality. The same power that brings the individual persons together into a congregation brings the individual congregations to unity in the church body. The church body, or the Synod, has, according to this principle, just as much power as has been given to it by the individual congregations that compose it. This power is stated in the Synod's constitution, which is the covenant band that holds them together. By this the congregations lose nothing of their original power; they have only

by free choice decided on a certain method whereby they are to exercise their power, namely, together in the Synod. If now the right of delegation is granted to the congregation, it is clear that they can make the Synod the highest authority in making and executing the laws among the congregations of the Synod. But the objection is raised that the Synod is a human agency while the congregation is a divine institution, and that it is wrong to set the human above the divine. This statement, made even by many respected and educated theologians, seems to merit our agreement; but is it really well founded? If the right of representation is granted to the individual congregations, then the Synod which consists of the representatives of the various congregations may be looked upon as a congregation of the congregations. If the individual congregation is a divine institution, then the Synod must be so too. On the other hand, it is just as easy to prove that the local, geographically limited, humanly organized, visible congregation is just as much a human institution as the Synod is. The situation is that the concept of the congregation is something quite different from what one thinks of when one speaks of the individual congregation as a divine institution as compared with the Synod. We, for our part, believe that both are equally divine, and equally human, for they both have a divine and a human side. What congregation is it then that one may speak of as being a divine institution? Certainly not the one which merely has a local, geographic existence, or because it has this, nor the one which has this or that polity, or consists of a greater or smaller number of members, or is so or so old, or meets so or so often, at this or that time. No — but it can be said only of Christ's church, whose only outward signs are that it has and uses God's pure Word and sacraments. And now I ask, does the Synod have these distinguishing marks or not? We preach the Word of God and distribute the sacraments at our synodical meetings, and may we then dare to believe that the Church of Christ is there?

Further: It is conceivable that several individual congregations could be put together into one. If now all the congregations in the Synod consolidated into one: What then would become of the assertion that the individual congregation is a divine institution but not the Synod? Therefore we abide by this statement that the Synod lawfully organized is a congregation of the congregations and on the basis of the right of representation in the individual congregations the Synod has the highest authority in the Church

body, within the limits of its constitution. But in saying that the Synod, according to this principle, has the highest authority to legislate and judge, we do not thereby say that it has the power to establish new articles of faith nor any new good works (nor can the individual congregations do so). No: Such matters lie outside the boundaries of human polity. The doctrine has once for all been determined by God in His Word and witnessed to by His Church in her confessions. We only mean that the Synod has the highest authority in the matters pertaining to church regulation and which can become the object of human discussion and decision. To show what I mean, we wish to point to an example that is at hand, namely the revision of the congregational constitution. According to the congregational principle the Synod would have no power to determine any constitution for the congregations, or make any changes in it, — for according to this principle every congregation must make its own laws. The most that the Synod could do would be to recommend the proposed constitution, but would not have the power to require unconditional acceptance. But, according to the synodical principle the Synod has authority to determine which constitution the congregations shall have and what changes shall or shall not be made in it. The basis on which this authority rests I have already pointed out; now it remains to show the reasonableness of this principle. The spirit of Christianity is not separatistic, but tends to fellowship and unity. One in faith and confession, the Christians also want to be one in love, and as far as possible, one in polity. This is *one* point in favor of the synodical principle. Another is that it must be better for the congregations together to form their polity, than for each congregation to do so for itself. The basis for this is that one must suppose the existence of more wisdom and experience in all the congregations together than in the one congregation alone.

“Further: The synodical principle guards, on the one side, against the power of the clergy, and on the other against independent selfishness and separatistic self-will. If the Synod, which consists of pastors and laymen with equal rights, retains the power to exercise the government of the Church, it is impossible that any power of the clergy can arise. But if the power to legislate is placed in the individual congregation by itself, how easy is it not for an aggressive minister to lead the congregation’s legislation in such a way that he will by himself be lord in his own cottage. Also, if the Synod legislates, then disorder and dissolution will be avoided.

Suppose that every congregation legislates for itself, without regard to what the other congregations in the Synod do, what will be the result? Yes, it will be confusion and soon complete dissolution of the Synod. The one congregation would soon scarcely recognize the other, for each one would have its own regulations and go its own way. Soon one would have no common service books or anything else in common. The Reformed Church, where the congregational principle and subjectivism in everything else prevailed from the beginning, is an evident example of whither this principle leads.

"From what has been said it is clear that the synodical form of church government is in accord with the principles of church polity set forth in the confessions of the Lutheran Church, yes, one may say, a logical development of these principles. It is also completely democratic, which we also may consider as an advantage, if we believe that the democratic form of government is based on justice and for an enlightened people more fitting than a monarchy or aristocracy.

"It is according to this principle that I now proceed to present some proposals for changes in our constitutions. As pertains particularly to a synodical council I want to mention that this Council is not to be a power over or alongside of the Synod or a loophole for ministerial authority, but, as one may clearly see in the stipulations, it is intended to be a strengthened committee, consisting of an equal number of pastors and laymen (except the chairman) on which one may lay a great deal of work and routine matters, and this in order to have more orderliness in our affairs and have more time at our meetings for the purely spiritual and theological questions than has been the case hitherto.

"Elimination of the meetings of the ministerium and substituting pastoral gatherings for private discussion of matters pertaining to the office and for mutual edification, instruction, and encouragement, I don't need to motivate, but I believe that such a change would be worth thinking about. These pastoral meetings have no official significance and no decisions are made there."²

It is well to note that this article was written by Norelius prior to 1870. He has been called the leader of the "separatistic" movement in Minnesota.³ But in his article on the Scriptural bases for church polity he specifically states the principle that Christianity is not separatistic, and he urges synodical unity.

Was Norelius actually working for separation while proclaiming the principle that Christianity is not separatistic? That there

were some in Minnesota who zealously advocated separation from the Augustana Synod is a well known fact, as seen from numerous letters and from the minutes of the Minnesota Conference. But others than Norelius were really the ones who were trying to persuade him to take steps toward separation. One especially revealing phrase may be quoted. In the midst of the strife in 1884 P. A. Cederstam wrote to Norelius expressing his regret that he (Cederstam) had helped to sow the seeds — “perhaps I should say weeds” — of independence in Minnesota, but he had come to believe — “as Norelius does” — that it would be most unfortunate if Minnesota should become independent.⁴

It was in 1875 while Norelius was president of the Synod that a constitution was adopted which would provide for dissolution of the Synod into district synods. Norelius had not served on the committee which submitted this proposal. In 1876, when it was to come up for a final vote, Norelius warned against the proposal and it was voted down by a decisive majority. The vote was: five pastors for, 65 against; one lay delegate for, 29 against it.⁵

Far from trying to break up the Synod Norelius had been the one who presented positive suggestions for strengthening the Synod. The proposal for a synodical council came from Norelius and was adopted in 1872. This constitutional provision for a synodical council has been followed in later revisions of the constitution, not only in principle but in almost the same form as then suggested.

Hasselquist, it is true, was an advocate of synodical unity, and specifically an advocate of a synod centralized in Illinois. The latter idea never appealed to Norelius. He had visions of Minnesota as a strongly Lutheran state, a vision which seemingly had no response in the mind of Hasselquist. This fact became a source of friction and disagreement, though in the great essentials of their religious views the two men were generally much alike.

NOTES

¹*Minn. Konf. Protokoll*, 1858 in *Tidskrift*, 1899, 133; May 18-20, 1871, Mimeo ed., 38; Sept. 21-23, 1871, Mimeo ed., 40f.; May 27-30, 1874, Mimeo ed., 93; *Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 26, 1863; June 14, 1867; June 13, 1868; June 21, 1869; June 17-21, 1870; June 15, 1871.

²*Rätta Hemlandet och Augustana*, Jan., 1870, Vol. 15, No. 1, 6ff.

³O. F. Ander, *T. N. Hasselquist*, 46, 136, 140f., 147f.

⁴P. A. Cederstam to Norelius, May 26, 1884 (MS).

⁵*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 24, 1874; June 19-29, 1875; June 24-July 3, 1876.

Chapter 31

AGAIN AT THE HELM

NORELIUS was 65 years old in 1898, the age when most men begin to think of retiring from active service. He could look back on a fruitful ministry, including more than forty years as parish pastor, the establishment of at least seven congregations and two institutions, participating in the organizing of the Minnesota Conference and the Augustana Synod, seven years of service as president of the Conference and seven as president of Synod, besides literary labors of great importance.

At two different periods in his life he had been given up as hopelessly ill, but had recovered, and at 65 was on the threshold of another dozen years of active service in the position of leadership in the Church he loved.

Honored and esteemed by the great majority of those who knew him, he was yet the same artless and unaffected friend that he had been in younger days. Only a few, old comrades such as Cederstam and Peter Carlson, now called him "Brother." Younger brethren in the ministry felt it a privilege to be allowed to address him as "Farbror" (Uncle).

But there were also those who had no desire to see him return to the arena.

The Augustana Synod, together with Lutherans all over the world, celebrated a jubilee year in 1883, the 400th anniversary of Luther's birth. Two years later, Augustana had its own 25th anniversary jubilee, with Norelius giving the historical address. In 1893 Augustana observed still another jubilee, the 300th anniversary of Sweden's acceptance of the Augsburg Confession at "Uppsala möte," which was the formal and official establishment of the Lutheran faith in Sweden. This anniversary was the greatest event in the Synod up to that time. Again it was Norelius who gave the main address on behalf of Augustana, in recognition of its heritage from the mother church. Because of the significance of this occasion the Church of Sweden sent one of its bishops to participate in the festivities at Rock Island. It was the first time that a Swedish bishop crossed the Atlantic. The Right Reverend Knut Henning Gezelius von Scheele, Ph.D., Th.D., bishop of the

diocese of Visby, represented the Church of Sweden, and did it in such a manner as to form closer bonds of fellowship between his church and Augustana. Endowed with great learning and dignity, and having a warm and sympathetic heart, he made a favorable impression in America, and on his return to Sweden created a better feeling towards Augustana than had hitherto prevailed in the mother country. The personal friendship that developed between him and the leaders of the Augustana Synod was real and lasting. Later visits helped to cement these relationships.

P. J. Swärd was president of the Synod, having been elected in 1891 for the first time. He had come to Vasa as assistant to Norelius in 1878, and soon afterwards was called as regular pastor, serving there until 1886. He was pastor of First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, when he was chosen as synodical president. He was re-elected each year until 1898, when he decided to return to Sweden to enter the service of the Church in his native land.

Consequently there was an open field for all who aspired to the presidency in 1899. And there were several who aspired. But if Eric Norelius was one of them he kept it a secret from his friends. A hint of what went on behind the scenes is revealed in a letter written to Norelius when the news of his election reached Chicago:

"I am very much elated over the news from the Augustana Synod's 40th convention. Presidential candidates: E. N[orelius], C. E. L[indberg], and M. C. R[anseen]. Informal ballot in Dr. N's favor, 59 votes, L's 21, and R's 55. Official vote resulted Dr. N. 82, L. 25 and R. 39! Beautiful, joy-bringing result! — God be praised for this highly desirable conclusion!

"Permit me, esteemed Dr. Norelius, to express this as my firm conviction, that the happy outcome of the presidential election will be considered by hundreds of true Augustana people as a direct answer to prayer regarding this very important matter. As far as I know no 'caucus' has been held, nor any 'canvass' made in the interest of Dr. Norelius, for such activities are not approved by the doctor's true friends; but all of these have had the sincere desire that Dr. Norelius at this Synod might be chosen for this important position, and to this end many, many have been praying zealously, and on Friday afternoon, June 9, 1899, between 3:30 and 5:00 the longed-for answer to prayer came. God be thanked and praised

for this. God is still among us as a Synod, that has again been proved.

"Dear Dr. Norelius, do not now bring sorrow by refusing to accept the presidency of the Synod. Such a blow in our present circumstances would be paralyzing, and would cause a separation. Your friends are no revolutionists; but they will not let themselves be so easily pushed aside by the advocates of intrigue, that I can say definitely. Through suffering one becomes wise. Defeat is not annihilation. The combination Sjöblom — Lindahl — Ranseen cannot exist forever and guide developments after their own rule. This sad combination has now for a number of years had its era of development and the result is, to say the least, lamentable. The first two have seemingly had to withdraw, but the third member of this sorrowful trio has allowed himself to be used as an instrument for the furtherance of their church-political propaganda. But now even he found, in St. Paul, Minnesota, Friday P.M., at 4 o'clock his well-deserved Waterloo!

"There are not a few who see in this defeat a long awaited righteous judgment of God, to the great future good of the Church.

"Not a few know what efforts have been put forth during the 1898-99 synodical year to get M. C. R. elected president. The leader in this unceasing canvassing I need not mention by name. Out on a famous plain in Kansas he has long had his tent pitched. And the pious Nathanael in whom is no guile, our highly respected A—son here in the city, has unfortunately been drawn into this preparatory planning without knowing what was really at stake. At our last Conference meeting it was found best for their plans to sidetrack him and he was therefore given the Conference presidency. Consequently one less candidate at the Synod in St. Paul. The rumors sought to assure us that Dr. Norelius would decline election, since he was to be a Texan in the future! He could therefore not be considered. Yes, so man prophesies, but God rules nevertheless. Several told me at least four weeks before the Synod that R and no one else could be chosen to fill the coming vacancy in the presidency caused by Swärd's removal to the fatherland. I sighed deeply, and since then I have even had a hard time to pray to God for the right man for this position. It seemed and felt so hopeless that I was unable to speak. Until today I thought that our Synod's hour of misfortune had struck. But though weeping tarries for a night, joy comes in the morning. Now thousands of true and faithful Augustana people are singing and rejoicing over victory after years

of sadness. Dear Dr. Norelius, do not refuse to serve. This concerns the glory of God and the progress of His kingdom among us. The Lord will grant you strength and success in your work. Many an Aaron and Hur will support you."¹

Though expressing reluctance Norelius yielded to the wishes of the delegates and assumed the office to which he had been elected. Ranseen was elected vice president but refused to accept the No. 2 position, whereupon Dr. C. E. Lindberg was elected.² (A few months later Ranseen was elected president of the General Council).

The Synod had grown rapidly in the 18 years since Norelius stepped down from the position of leadership in 1881. In 1899 there were 887 congregations, with 113,738 communicant members and 192,063 baptized members, an increase of almost 170 per cent, better than nine per cent a year.³

The rate of gain slowed down soon after 1900, as the immigration from Sweden tapered off. Nevertheless, the growth of the Synod from 1899 to 1911 was 51 per cent.

It was a different Synod in various respects from the one Norelius had served two decades earlier. Instead of a somewhat boyish wrestling with the problems of the '70's the Augustana Synod had grown to adolescence, hesitating at times between the inner feeling of self-sufficiency as an independent church body and self-consciousness as it sought to take its place with older and larger church groups in America. It was still almost entirely Swedish at the turn of the century. Of the 469 pastors in 1900, all but 30 were born in Sweden. The tremendous influx of immigrants in the 1880's and the 1890's had served to postpone for another generation the transition to English which was about to take place in the early '80's.

Norelius had never been one to urge the perpetuation of the Swedish language in America, though he was never apologetic for his Swedish birth and heritage. He preached in the English language when the occasion required it, ever since the time of his ordination. As early as 1871 the Committee on Church Service Book, of which Norelius was a member, found it necessary to make suggestions for congregations using English at services. It was recommended that they use the General Council's "Church Book."⁴

In 1879 Norelius, as president of the Synod, reminded the pastors that "it may also be well to remember that the pastor's way of mingling with and showing interest in the young people is of the greatest importance. The Americanization, that is constantly going on especially in the cities, and the preference shown by the

young people for the English language, also has a bearing on this question. I believe therefore that the Synod ought to take steps with respect to the language question, so that the needs may be met in time. If we wait too long, we will suffer irreparable damage."⁵

A committee elected to study the transition from Swedish to English gave a comprehensive report in 1880. The committee did not advise the forming of all-English congregations, but the use of English and Swedish as needed in instruction and in worship services.

The Mission Committee of the General Council thereupon began to investigate the possibility of organizing English Lutheran congregations in the Twin Cities and in Red Wing.⁶ The General Council Mission Committee sent Rev. G. H. Trabert to Minnesota, and congregations were organized in 1883 in Minneapolis and St. Paul. These, together with a few other English congregations organized in the next few years, were affiliated with the Augustana Synod. But a break occurred in 1891, and the English-speaking congregations formed the Synod of the Northwest. The synodical relations were rather strained for a period of years.

Although English-speaking congregations were organized by the Augustana Synod in a few places in the 1890's there is no doubt but that the Synod had lost large numbers of young people since the day when Norelius warned that this would happen if the language question was not solved. Few of his brethren in 1879 could then see the trend as he saw it. Even in 1899 the Synod was not sufficiently alert to the needs, though its first English Hymnal was in the process of preparation, and was published in 1901, with a rather literal translation of the Swedish liturgy. In that year Norelius mentioned in his report that Sweden was taking steps to promote Swedish literature and culture in America. He indicated that the Synod would be glad to know this, "but we are not able to establish a Sweden here nor do we desire to do so. We are more and more becoming Americans."⁷

That this did not hinder the people of Swedish birth or ancestry from loving the old fatherland was emphasized by Norelius and was exemplified by deeds in 1903, when it was reported that the people of the Augustana Synod had contributed more than 100,000 Swedish kronor (about \$28,000) for relief of the needy in famine-stricken Norrland province.

Unity within the Synod and also among Lutherans of America and of all nations was the subject of pertinent comments by Dr.

Norelius in his annual report to the Synod in 1903. He suggested that the time had come for all Lutherans who stand on the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, to draw closer together in some sort of federation. He hoped that "free Lutheran conferences" could be held the following year in Philadelphia in order that European and American Lutherans could become better acquainted.⁸ Although Norelius was years ahead of the time in his dreams of Lutheran unity, he was not destined to live to see the developments in 1917 and 1918, the beginning of mergers and federations and co-operative work.

Norelius feared that the unity of the Synod was in danger. In his 1903 report he issued these warnings and suggestions:

"As to the question of the relationship between the Synod and the Conferences, it is to be feared that, if we are not on guard, the bonds of synodical unity will be more and more weakened. Several symptoms seem to indicate this. Too much centralization and too much individualism are equally harmful. In a free church we must have common interests if we are to hold together and accomplish anything. If, for example, one Conference does not want to work with the Synod in maintaining a school, or missions, or institutions of charity, etc., but goes its own way without asking what the Synod wants or decides, then the synodical unity is in reality broken.

"To divide the larger conferences into smaller ones would undoubtedly be only a temporary palliative against the tendency to break up. I think it would be better if the Synod would agree to establish general boards or commissions for the various branches of activity, consisting of members from all the conferences in the Synod. We would thus have one *Board of Education* to direct all the Synod's educational work; one *Mission Board* for home, immigrant, and foreign missions and church extension fund, one *Board of Institutions of Charity* and the Pension Fund, etc. Much collision could thus be avoided, the scope of the work could be enlarged, and separatistic tendencies nipped in the bud. By this no activity already under way would be stifled or come under 'boss control'; one would only put it in its right relationship to the whole and thereby aid its progress." (The Synod took no action to put these suggestions into effect).⁹

Though progress was slow in the matter of Lutheran unity and though Norelius at times feared that the dissolution of the Synod was imminent, he nevertheless did not despair, for he felt convinced that there was unity in the essentials. In 1906 the Synod met in

Denver, and as Norelius marvelled at this he exclaimed, "Who could have imagined this 46 years ago? Many still living can remember when 'Pike's Peak' seemed like a saga of Eldorado. That the Synod now meets here is a testimony of the wonderful growth of the Swedish Lutheran Church in this country.

"We may ask, What has made this growth possible? The only answer is that God has spared us from division and has kept us united as a Church. Have we known how to appreciate this fully? How different it would have been now if our pioneers had begun by discussing questions of polity and made these the main questions, which are really secondary. God be praised that they and their successors through God's grace have held fast the basic principles of the Reformation and have understood that they should establish the churchly idea of unity in doctrine and not in polity. This constitutes the Lutheran Church's strength in this country, as strange as this may seem to other Church denominations that have an opposite idea of unity. To them the Lutheran Church seems hopelessly divided. And so it may appear to a superficial observer . . . In spite of the many synods there is a greater unity in doctrine than many outsiders suspect, and much more now than fifty years ago."¹⁰

Norelius could now look back on a ministry of 50 years, and this anniversary had been recognized by the Synod in 1905 in resolutions of congratulation and thanks:

"The Synod herewith expresses its sincere thanks to Dr. E. Norelius for his long and faithful service. The Synod also recalls with joy and gratitude Dr. Norelius' contributions to our cultural work in other fields, his competent service in the leadership of our Church, and the many other accomplishments he has performed, and first and last we give thanks and praise to God for that which Dr. Norelius has achieved, and pray that His Zion may yet for a long time have in its midst this honored pioneer and father."¹¹

This official prayer of the Synod in behalf of Norelius was heard, and he had the distinction of serving as president at the Golden Jubilee in 1910, when crowds estimated at 12,000 people gathered in Rock Island. It was a joyous week as both the Synod and Augustana College and Theological Seminary observed their fiftieth anniversary. A temporary "Jubilee Hall" had been erected north of Seventh Avenue across the street from the College campus.

Heading the list of distinguished visitors was Bishop von Scheele of Sweden, who because of his previous visits was now wel-

comed not only with the respect due to a man in his position, but with genuine friendliness and affection. Two pastors from Sweden came as representatives of the General Pastoral Association of the Church, and of the Evangelical Fatherland Society. Several of the Lutheran synods and Lutheran colleges in the United States had sent representatives, and Uppsala University was represented by its Rector Magnificus, Professor Henrik Schuck.

Gustav Andreen was president of Augustana, a position he had held since 1901. With characteristic enthusiasm and energy he had taken the lead in preparations for the jubilee and had succeeded in arousing his colleagues and the student body as well as the Augustana congregations in Rock Island and Moline. An almost superhuman job of housing and feeding the thousands of delegates and visitors was accomplished without any serious mishaps. Minor problems were soon forgotten by the good-natured throngs of people.

The Andreens were hosts to the Bishop and his wife and to Dr. and Mrs. Norelius. The festivities opened in a quiet manner with the traditional Saturday evening prayer session on June 4. The following day was a festive Sunday, with the College and Seminary baccalaureate services, and other programs throughout the day. At the evening service a touching scene was enacted, when the roll of the founders was called. Dr. Nils Forsander read the list of names from original minutes of the Synod. Is L. P. Esbjörn here? No response. Is T. N. Hasselquist here? No response. Three of the founders of the Synod were present, Rev. G. Peters of Rockford, Mr. J. Erlander, also of Rockford, and Norelius. Peter Beckman was still living but not able to be present.¹²

The bishop arrived in Rock Island on Monday morning, June 6, and received a tremendous ovation as the automobile brought him and Mrs. Scheele from the railroad station to the college. His first public appearance was on Tuesday forenoon. As he entered the jubilee hall Dr. Norelius welcomed him to the platform. There were no stilted formal greetings or exchange of compliments. The bishop walked up to the platform and embraced Dr. Norelius, while the audience stood and gave them a thunderous round of applause. Norelius then called on his fellow-patriarchs, Rev. Peters and Mr. Erlander, who were on the platform, and taking them both by the hand led them to the front of the platform, and spoke his final farewell to these two fellow-workers one of whom—Peters—was blind, and the other—Erlander—stone deaf. The audience arose

in greeting to the aged pioneers, and the bishop also arose and gave each one of them an affectionate embrace.¹³

The festivities continued throughout the week, with the climax on Saturday, the 11th. A great procession formed in the main college building and proceeded to the jubilee hall, with Dr. Norelius and Bishop von Scheele in the lead, the bishop carrying his staff, the symbol of his office. The bishop brought official greetings from King Gustav V to President William Howard Taft, and to the Synod. Telegrams were sent by the Synod to President Taft and to King Gustav. Thereupon the bishop preached the festive sermon on John 3.16, his theme being, "The Conflict in Today's World Drama."¹⁴

During the jubilee week Dr. Norelius was honored with another degree, that of LL.D., conferred upon him by Augustana College and Theological Seminary. He knew that further honors would be coming from Sweden as soon as Bishop von Scheele had returned home and given his official report. He had received information that the King of Sweden would name him Commander of the Order of the North Star, First Class, and he had tried to dissuade those who were planning this honor for him, because he feared that some Augustana people would not like it.¹⁵

Though honored at home and abroad Norelius was no fawning sycophant in the presence of the bishop and other dignitaries from Sweden, nor did he hesitate to tell his own Church that the jubilee should be a time for self-examination as to whether they still were building on the Rock, Jesus Christ. In his annual report he called attention to the fact that since 1867 there had been a serious disagreement between the Augustana Synod and the Church of Sweden, due to the successful attempt of an American Episcopal bishop to persuade Swedish pastors to give emigrants a recommendation to the Episcopal church in the United States.¹⁶

With utmost simplicity and yet with propriety and tactfulness Norelius welcomed the distinguished guests at the jubilee and gave appropriate responses to their greetings. One old friend and neighbor, Rev. Johannes Fremling, did not have courage to draw near to the platform but wrote a note of appreciation to Norelius after he came home: "At the jubilee meeting I did not dare to come so far forward that I could say hello to you. But I saw with joy your worthy and tactful appearance in the presence of the Swedish dignitaries."¹⁷

Norelius treasured a letter written by Bishop von Scheele on board the steamship *United States* as he was returning to Sweden:

"Among all the precious things I take with me home from this memorable journey your image stands foremost in my mind. May the Lord hold His protecting hand over the Augustana Synod and her worthy leader."¹⁸

Norelius had been made a knight of the Swedish Order of the North Star in 1902, an honor which he accepted not as given to him personally but as a recognition of the Augustana Synod. Now, as von Scheele gave his glowing report to his Church and his government King Gustav conferred on Dr. Norelius the highest mark of distinction in the Order, that of Commander, First Class. Official notice of the honor reached Norelius just at Christmas time, 1910.

NOTES

¹C. O. Lindell to Norelius, June 12, 1899 (MS).

²*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1899, 19.

³*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1899, 146.

⁴*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 10, 1871.

⁵*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 19-27, 1879.

⁶*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, July 9-18, 1881.

⁷*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, June 13-18, 1901, 11.

⁸*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1903.

⁹*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1903.

¹⁰*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1906.

¹¹*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1905, 24f.

¹²*Augustana*, June 16, 1910.

¹³*Augustana*, June 16, 1910.

¹⁴*Augustana*, June 23, 1910.

¹⁵L. G. Abrahamson to Norelius, Apr. 19, 1910, Apr. 29, 1910 (MSS).

¹⁶*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1910, 36; Bishop von Scheele had been strongly opposed to this practice since his first visit to America, and in 1910 succeeded in bringing about a reversal of the Church's stand on the question. He had even threatened to resign from his office as bishop if the Church of Sweden did anything contrary to the interests of the Augustana Synod. L. G. Abrahamson to Norelius, January 22, 1910 (MS).

¹⁷J. Fremling to Norelius, Aug. 1, 1910 (MS).

¹⁸Henning von Scheele to Norelius, Aug. 21, 1910 (MS).

Chapter 32

A LIVING LINK WITH THE PAST

THE JUBILEE YEAR proved to be a stimulating experience for the Augustana people from coast to coast. The great festivities in Rock Island were echoed in special programs in hundreds of congregations, and a wave of church patriotism swept through the entire Augustana Synod.

It was Norelius who served as a living link between the past and the present. That his presence among the new generation had served to enrich the anniversary festivities was graciously and generously recognized by many. His 77th birthday anniversary on October 26, 1910, became the occasion for messages of congratulation and appreciation.

The president of Augustana wrote:

"We all value Uncle's long, faithful, and significant labors, and thank God that Uncle now during the jubilee year was able personally to bind together the work of the founders with that of the children. May God give Uncle yet many happy years among us in our Synod."¹

Another of the leaders in the church, destined in time to be a successor of Norelius as president, wrote:

"You have been invaluable in your service to our Synod and our Swedish people. For all that you have meant for us I send you my deepest heartfelt gratitude. I want to say the same in regard to what you have been for me personally."²

It was clear to Norelius that this was the appropriate time to relinquish the reins to others. Before the Synod was to convene in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1911, he let it be known that he would not consider re-election.

He attended the opening of the Synod and preached the convention sermon using as his text the story of Martha and Mary, Luke 10. 38-42. He had read an article setting forth the duties of a church member, and these were to build churches, parsonages, hospitals and other institutions. But Norelius seemed to hear a loud squeaking, as in the days of pioneer, home-made wooden carts that ran without grease. Perhaps our spiritual carts are

running dry. All that which we have cannot take the place of the one thing needful.³

In his final report as president Norelius spoke out against the claims of some secular schools that it is their task to teach religion. He also warned against unionism and false unity in the church. He closed with a short and simple farewell greeting to the church he had served so long:

"Brethren, herewith I close my nineteen years of service as president of the Augustana Synod. I thank you for your confidence in me, your forbearance and patience, and pray God to bless you and all our congregations richly, so that God's Word in its truth and purity may dwell among our people and demonstrate its power unto salvation for as many as possible."

Dr. L. A. Johnston was elected president, and Dr. Norelius was named president emeritus. The new leader expressed the gratitude of the Church to Dr. Norelius, after which Norelius left the convention, returning home to be with his wife who was seriously ill.⁴

Yet a few years remained for them to live among their old neighbors at Vasa, and to make frequent contacts with friends far and near, through personal visits and through correspondence. They had celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1905 and they lived to celebrate their 60th anniversary together in 1915.

Two of their sons were still living, Leonard at Vasa and Sigfrid at Lindstrom, Minnesota. Both were married and had families. Theodore, shortly after embarking on a career as a lawyer, drowned in 1889, at the age of thirty-one.

In May, 1912 Gustavus Adolphus College observed its fiftieth anniversary, in connection with the Conference convention. The first student who came to Red Wing in the fall of 1862, Jonas Magny, had died in 1910, a few days before the Synod's jubilee. But the first teacher, Eric Norelius, was on hand to give the sermon at the Sunday morning worship in First Lutheran Church of St. Peter on May 21. His theme was: The Reasons Why We Can Call Gustavus Adolphus College a Successful School. These reasons were: It was founded at the right time, when there was a great need for pastors and teachers; it was founded on right principles; it began in the right spirit; and it began in the right place. Red Wing was the right place then because the interest was greatest there. When greater interest developed at Carver the school moved

to that place, and when greater interest sprang up at St. Peter that was the right place for the school.

In the afternoon of the same day, at a program in the college auditorium, Norelius led in the opening prayer, after which Dr. George E. Vincent of the University of Minnesota, and others, spoke.⁵

Gustavus Adolphus College at this time had a total of more than 300 students in the College, the Academy, the School of Commerce, and the School of Music. Dr. J. P. Uhler was acting president. When the Conference took up the question of electing a president, Dr. Norelius made a motion that the question be postponed for one year. His motion was defeated and Dr. O. J. Johnson was elected. He declined the first call, but a new call was issued the following year, and he accepted.⁶

Public appearances became less frequent but did not cease entirely, as requests came to Norelius requesting his presence and participation in anniversary festivities in some of the congregations he had known since pioneer times. As he now rode by automobile to some of the places that he first reached on foot over wilderness trails he could but marvel and thank God for the almost incredible changes that had taken place. Such an automobile tour in the summer of 1914 brought him from Chisago Lake to Cambridge by way of North Branch, Harris, and Fish Lake "on excellent roads — think of it, by automobile on good roads through these regions which had been impressed on my brain fifty years ago as a veritable 'wolf haunt'."⁷

One of the last, if not the last, church anniversary Dr. Norelius attended was the sixtieth anniversary of the Vasa congregation on June 24, 1915. A new pastor, the Rev. E. A. Lindgren, was installed at the morning service. Dr. P. A. Mattson, Conference president, officiated, and Dr. Norelius was one of the assisting clergymen. In the afternoon Norelius gave an address to a large congregation, gathered for this special festivity. After expressing his joy at being able to attend the sixtieth anniversary of the congregation he had founded in 1855, and which he served for many years as pastor, he reminded the people that they had been the recipients of God's grace both negatively and positively, the negative to cause them to "behave themselves" and put them into a condition for receiving the positive through God's Word and sacraments.⁸

His last term as pastor of the Vasa Church had ended in 1905. In that year the congregation published "Vasa Illustrata," a fiftieth anniversary book edited by Norelius. This historical volume contained 269 pages, of which 181 pages consisted of illustrations. This unique picture album has photographs of practically all the Vasa pioneers, as well as the homes in which they lived, the three churches they built, and the Vasa Children's Home. There are reproductions of several drawings by Sigrid Norelius, a daughter-in-law of Dr. Norelius.

The Norelius family had lived in their own home since 1878. This home, a fairly commodious two-story frame dwelling, stood directly across from the church in the one-street village of Vasa. No one knows the uncounted number of times that Norelius walked from his home to the old, beloved red-brick church across the way, or another quarter of a mile beyond to the Children's Home. No one can tell how many times he hitched up his team and drove the nine-mile trip to Goodhue. The bricks would hardly suffice to tell the number of his appearances or errands in the Vasa Church, nor the fence posts along the way the number of trips to Goodhue.

From the time he moved into his own home he had not intended to serve as pastor of the Vasa Church. But the congregation called him again in 1886 and he accepted and served until 1889. His fifth term of service was from 1901 to 1905. During the years when other pastors were in charge there were frequent occasions when Norelius was asked to assist in the work, and to take charge during temporary absences of the regular pastor.

The little congregation at Goodhue, which never numbered over 100 communicant members, had been his parish since it was organized in 1869. His last visit to Goodhue was at Christmas, 1915. He conducted Christmas services, and baptized a baby boy, Lowell Francis Peterson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur N. Peterson. This proved to be his last pastoral service.⁹

A few weeks earlier, on October 16, he had conducted a funeral service at Vasa, the last one of many funerals in Vasa since the first one in 1856 when a pioneer woman froze to death. The last funeral at which Norelius spoke was the funeral of Mrs. Kate Swenson, an old member of the Vasa congregation.¹⁰

Shortly after the beginning of the year 1916 Mrs. Norelius became ill, and for a time hovered on the brink of a severe case of pneumonia. Though she was given faithful care by her daughter-in-law and granddaughters, her husband was equally faithful in

waiting on her, even to the point of neglecting his own rest and sleep. The result was that when she began to improve his health began to fail. A severe cold forced him to take to his bed. He weakened rapidly and life ebbed away. On March 15, 1916, Eric Norelius breathed his last. His wife was at his bedside, as was also the son, Leonard together with members of his family. The other son, Sigfrid, residing at Lindstrom, Minnesota, had been notified of his father's illness but did not reach Vasa in time for a final farewell.

The news quickly spread that Norelius, the patriarch and pastor, had departed from the earthly scene. Hundreds from far and near came to attend the final service in tribute to the esteemed friend and eminent churchman. On March 20, just as winter was ready to give way to spring, his body was committed to the soil in the Vasa churchyard, a few steps from the main entrance of the church he had helped to build and in which he had so many times proclaimed the message of life in the name of Jesus Christ.

Dr. L. A. Johnston, president of the Augustana Synod, delivered the funeral sermon, based on 2 Timothy 4. 6-8. Dr. Mattson, the president of the Minnesota Conference, read the obituary. Resolutions of condolence to the family and of gratitude to God for the life and contribution of Norelius were read by representatives of Gustavus Adolphus College, Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Augustana Book Concern, Minnesota College, the Vasa Children's Home, the Goodhue District, and a number of congregations and individuals. The service began at one o'clock. Exactly at 4:36 P.M. the coffin was lowered into the grave, as the setting sun cast its last rays on the scene.¹¹

NOTES

¹G. A. Andreen to Norelius, Oct. 25, 1910 (MS).

²G. A. Brandelle to Norelius, Oct. 22, 1910 (MS).

³*Augustana*, June 22, and 29, 1911.

⁴*Aug. Synod Protokoll*, 1911, 31f., 34f., 40f.; *Augustana*, July 6, 1911.

⁵*Minn. Stats Tidning*, May 29, 1912.

⁶*Minn. Stats Tidning*, May 29, 1912; Peterson, Conrad, *Remember Thy Past*, 74.

⁷Lund, *Minn. Konf. och dess Förs. Historia*, II, 918.

⁸*Minn. Stats Tidning*, June 30, 1915.

⁹Information furnished by Vendla Norelius, granddaughter of Eric Norelius.

¹⁰Information furnished by Pastor N. William Anderson, formerly of Vasa. It was his grandmother who was buried.

¹¹*Minn. Stats Tidning*, March 29, 1916.

Chapter 33

FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD

ERIC NORELIUS was not a "son of the middle border" as author Hamlin Garland called himself. But Norelius observed and participated in the activities of the same pioneering era that Garland describes in his autobiography. Since Norelius as a mature man had arrived in Minnesota in 1854, and Garland was born in 1860, Norelius had seen the midwest under more truly frontier conditions than Garland had. He knew from personal experience much of the story of the border as it moved westward from the Mississippi to the Missouri, and beyond.

Norelius knew frontier life in all the realism that Garland describes. He saw the same primeval beauty of the original landscape, the groves of oak and elm and maple, the hazel bushes, the wild flowers, the Mississippi River bluffs, the unbroken prairies, the flocks of wild geese and ducks. He knew also from personal experience the hardships of frontier life, the toil and sweat, the heat and mosquitoes of summer, the cold and snow of winter, the poverty, the sickness, the prairie fires, the tedious modes of travel, the discouraging aspect of drab, unpainted pioneer shacks.

Norelius was keenly aware of the romantic side of pioneer life, but he was not carried away by it. When Hamlin Garland, as a school boy, exults at the theme "Going West," Norelius would have understood his feelings. When Garland voices sadness at seeing the land fenced and plowed, because this destroyed forever the wild life and the natural beauty of the frontier scene, his words would find an echo in the mind and heart of Norelius, for he was a nature lover and he revelled in scenic beauty.

In the fall of 1881 Hamlin Garland spent a few days in Red Wing after a visit to his father's pioneer homestead in Dakota. From Hastings to Red Wing his journey was made on the Mississippi River steamer *War Eagle*, a boat on which Norelius must have travelled many a time. One may even conceive the possibility that the two men may have met.

If the twenty-year-old budding author had chanced to meet the forty-eight-year-old former president of the Augustana Synod they would soon have discovered that though they were part of

the same westward movement and had some things in common they were in two different worlds of thought and attitude towards life.

The first difference they would have sensed was that the youth was an "American" of old Yankee stock and the man was a Swedish immigrant. The youth had had only slight contact with immigrants, but he would always remember that at school the Yankees fought the "Norskies," and that it was a Norwegian hired man who transmitted smallpox to the Garland family.

If they had continued their conversation further they would have found more fundamental differences. Norelius would have asked the young man about his religious views and would soon have been ready to classify Hamlin Garland as a lapsed Methodist, a freethinker, a disciple of Robert Ingersoll. Garland would have called Norelius a preacher of "outworn traditions and empty creeds."

Undoubtedly both men would have had the courtesy and the good sense to keep such condemnatory judgments to themselves, and in spite of different religious views they might have found topics for interesting conversation.

Though Garland was just on the threshold of life he already had begun to sense something of the futility and the tragedy of migration, a feeling which he later put into poignant words: "What is it all about, this life of ours? Certainly to be for ever weary and worried, to be endlessly soiled with thankless labor and to grow old before one's time, soured and disappointed, is not the whole destiny of man!"¹

Norelius would have agreed that this was a good question. But where Garland answered in terms of political action and struggle for economic justice, Norelius answered in terms of religion.

Garland could speak of the Grange movement as the most "picturesque, delightful and helpful thing that has ever risen out of American rural life." Norelius classed it among "the unprofitable works of darkness," and wrote long articles in the church press warning against it.

When Garland was successful with his speeches on economic justice he rejoiced with his "socialistic friends." Norelius, as early as 1878, had issued strong warnings against socialism, saying that it was a movement which might destroy all sense of what is right in society.

In the mind and heart of Norelius the "tragedy" of pioneer life, as of life anywhere, was a spiritual problem. Therefore he

saw people as distressed and scattered, in need of a shepherd, and he saw his task clearly outlined for him: To do all in his power to bring the Word of God and the ministrations of the Church to people. This included not merely the establishing of congregations and the building of churches, but the founding of schools, of charitable institutions, the distribution of Christian literature, the furtherance of Christian culture.

Norelius' ministry was devoted almost entirely to the Swedish immigrants and their children in America—the "plodding Swedes," as Hamlin Garland calls them. Norelius knew, perhaps even better than Garland, that they were plodding Swedes. But he also knew that they came from a land where public elementary education had been free and compulsory since 1842, long before such a system became a reality in America. They came from a land where human slavery had never existed, and many of those Swedish immigrants had fought side by side with such men as Hamlin Garland's father to abolish slavery in the United States and to uphold the honor of "that striped silken rag."

But it was neither pride nor prejudice that determined the field of activity for Norelius. It was the plain force of circumstances. He saw it as his God-given duty to establish the church among his own countrymen. He found the task big enough to take all his energy and all his time — more than all. He did his best to enlist helpers and to encourage them in their work.

Though we may be amused by his statement, when driving through Minneapolis for the first time in 1860, that it was not necessary to stop since there were no Swedes in Minneapolis, we must remember that that statement is not the complete story of the vision and the zeal of this pastor and churchman.

If the manpower and the funds had been available when Norelius was president of the Synod in the seventies it is almost certain that Lutheran churches would have been established among the Negroes of the South and the Indians of the Southwest. A beginning was made to establish mission work among the Indians in Indian Territory, but was abandoned, mainly because of lack of men for the task.

During Norelius' second period in the presidency the Augustana Synod obtained its first foreign mission field in Honan, China. Nearer home, too, Norelius saw the need of mission work. In 1907 the Synod convened in New Britain, Connecticut. In his presidential report he stated that New England should be considered a great

mission field for the Lutheran Church, not only because many Lutheran immigrants had come and settled in this region, but also because Puritanism had been unfaithful to the Word, and had followed philosophy and rationalism, and a morality not based on Christ and His redemption.

Norelius did not wish to make his church a proselyting church. He had frequently and earnestly spoken out against such practices. But he had a concern for the souls of men. During his student days at Columbus, Ohio, in 1851 he went one day to the state fair. After visiting the horse, cattle, sheep, and hog barns, the manufacturers' salon, the domestic salon, and the florians salon, he went aside to a hillock and sat down to rest. He watched the crowds — some 20,000 people, he estimated — and he wondered. Will they all be saved? He felt that the answer was: No.²

His genuine interest in people made it easy for him to get acquainted with strangers, but he admitted that it was difficult for him at times to converse with them about their spiritual welfare, especially when he sensed strong opposition to religion and the church. He knew the futility of religious arguments, and avoided such encounters if at all possible. He preferred an unimpassioned, peaceful, man-to-man discussion of matters pertaining to faith and religion. Both friends and strangers had frequent opportunities for such private talks with him.

He had no desire to shine in large and brilliant social gatherings, but rather shunned such events. He was at his best in conversation with a few intimate friends, and in such gatherings he could be both humorous and serious.

As a public speaker he was not imposing, being of medium height and build, and with a voice that was not strong or penetrating. Yet he could make himself heard easily because he spoke plainly and without any attempt at oratorical effects.³

His sermons and addresses were based on the facts of Scripture and of life. He did not hesitate to introduce humorous incidents and references, if they fitted in naturally. His presentations were always objective and instructive, appealing to the mind and the conscience of the hearers, rather than to the heart and the emotions.

He was convinced that there is only one power that can make men Christian and enable them to do good works. This power is the Word of God. The church is the institution which has been entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and teaching the Word. Therefore Norelius was never in doubt as to where his duty lay.

He was not unmindful of scientific progress, mechanical inventions, political and social movements which might, in some way, benefit man. Amid the changing picture of world events, however, he never lost sight of the background of eternal truth, God at work to bring His purposes to fruition.

Norelius was not a giant in any sense. He struggled against bodily weakness nearly all his life. His talents were not those of a genius. His formal education was rather limited. He could not boast of great business acumen. He was not one to plan his moves with shrewdness far ahead.

Yet his contribution to the church, and particularly to the Augustana Lutheran Church, was one of three-dimensional character: It was long, extending over more than sixty years; it was wide, affecting almost every branch of the Church's activity; and it was deep, touching on the very fundamentals of faith, hope, and love.

If there is one word that characterizes Eric Norelius and explains his contribution to the Church, it is the word faithfulness.

NOTES

¹Garland, Hamlin, *A Son of the Middle Border*, 367.

²Norelius, *En Minnesbok* (MS).

³G. R. in *Korsbaneret*, 1917, 174f. Norelius' clerical coat is in the Vasa Church museum. Its size indicates that he was about five feet, eight or nine inches tall, and weighed about 150-160 pounds.

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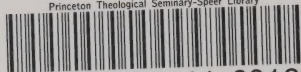
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